WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC
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Secrets of a dark magus

KEIJI HAINO

John Coltrane Nurse With Wound Wordsound Philip Jeck

Simon Fisher Turner DJ/Rupture Goodiepal DJ Spooky Peter Brötzmann Musique Actuelle

david grubbs / rickets & scurvy

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Editor's Idea

This month's issue contains a conclave of artists and projects that are more than usually wrapped up in their own singular bubbles. The mysterious proclamations of Keiji Haino have been baffling and magnetising worshippers for three decades, and his eccentric universe, mapped out by Alan Cummings on page 32, continues to expand with a surprising move into an alchemical form of DJing (though don't expect any immediate responses to his 'playa hate' from the likes of Jay-Z any time soon). Steven Stapleton's Nurse With Wound has remained relatively impenetrable in his farmhouse fortress in the Irish countryside, but David Keenan has been granted unprecedented access for his Primer on NWW's colossal back catalogue. I only regret that space limitations meant we could only scratch the surface of a mammoth discography, but at least we could publish a selection of very rarely-seen photos from the Nurse camp. Meanwhile, Howard Mandel, commemorating the 35th anniversary of John Coltrane's death on page 38, convincingly demonstrates how off the jazz message was the saxophonist's late music when it landed among the far more prosaic bop scene in the mid-60s.

Talking of anniversaries, we can at last begin to unveil *The Wire*'s plans to celebrate our own 20th anniversary, which occurs this year. Issue 1 of this publication is dated "Summer 1982", and fittingly the first of several events planned to mark the occasion happens this month on London's South Bank. We are proud to present the first appearance by Japanese group The Boredoms in nearly eight years on Saturday 13 July. Another outfit that has moved through a variety of dazzling incarnations, all overseen by the priestly presence of Yamatsuka Eye, their current drum-driven trance rock is jawdropping. As I write, John Cale, appearing on the same bill, has promised to create a special set for the occasion (see Out There for more details).

The Cale/Boredoms show is a foretaste of a string of exciting events we'll be rolling out at various points around the world this coming autumn. During October we will be hosting a four day festival in association with two Paris clubs, Instants Chavirés and Batofar (a floating venue on the Seine). And on 3 November, back at London's Royal Festival Hall, we'll be presenting a historic UK premiere of the incredible version of *Metal Machine Music* by Berlin New Music ensemble Zeitkratzer, with Lou Reed himself appearing as special guest. And that's by no means all. There are a number of other projects in the works: keep this frequency clear for further announcements.

Coinciding with these events will be a CD box set released through the Mute label, on which we'll simply be compiling a selection of favourite tracks of everyone working at the magazine – as much music as we can fit on three CDs that has inspired, bedazzled and spurred us on through two decades of sonic adventures. And finally, watch the bookshelves in November for *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring Of Modern Music*, a collection of new and previously published essays on the crucial movements and underlying forces that have shaped the development of modern music.

Before signing off, I'll just flag up a new section we're launching this month. The regular Ether Talk section is replaced by Cross Platform (page 78), with a broad remit to cover the many other media in which music and sound art play a significant role, from installations and Internet projects to film, video and DVD, computer games and software, visual art and sculpture, dance, etc. And that's enough announcements.

ROB YOUNG

WIRE

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New York Times, 22/09/01.

NONESUCH

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cd - water

JOHN HAMMOND
SOONER OR LATER
cd - water

ARETHA FRANKLIN
SOUL '69
lp - 4 men with beards

DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
DUSTY IN MEMPHIS
lp - 4 men with beards

LES MCCANN
LAYERS
lp - 4 men with beards

GLENN KOTCHE
INTRODUCING
cd - locust music / quakebasket

ON FILLMORE
ON FILLMORE
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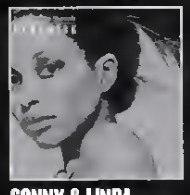
THE HOLY MODAL ROUNDERS
THE MORAY EELS EAT THE HOLY MODAL ROUNDERS
cd - water



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cd - water

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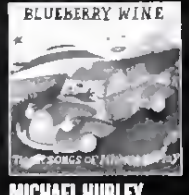

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People person: Davey Payne

Man of the people

Re: The People Band article (*The Wire* 220). Even though at times The People Band let others 'sit in', and sometimes it was fun and a laugh, and there would be serendipity, and we knew how to work with chance and build on it, I don't believe that we were there to be a catalyst for everybody to blast away, giving them a false sense of freedom or happiness. As far as I'm concerned we weren't out to entertain, and the audience were often confused, pained and drained. We were not trying to whip them into a frenzy or into primal emotions. I believe that at our best we were creating music on the highest level, knocking on the tenth door, and that may not necessarily be a good thing, or maybe it is, for some and not for others, including ourselves. After all, who are we to play the divine conch and bagpipes?

Of course, there was always the one guy who, after we had emptied the club in Groningen, would approach us in his macintosh and glasses, enthusiastically asking if we had made an album, etc, etc.

Davey Payne via email

Copyright, schmopyright

I read with great interest the John Oswald cover story and Editor's Idea (*The Wire* 219), which made me reflect about the most important and controversial problem of music today. The way Oswald looks at music is part of today's music culture. Instead of taking pretty famous samples, a lot of producers and artists use old and new semi-unknown artists for their sampling. They transform what they take into a new paradigm, which most of the time is hard to recognise.

Do you really think we are stealing art simply by sampling and changing it? Copyright laws are part of the past. The way music is produced today is different, and it has evolved in a way that the law can't constrain in some commercial way. Copyrights are made for people who want to make money out of their so-called art. Art is the expression of human genius, not a product. And such expression belongs to the human being, like Einstein's formulas, Botticelli's *Venus*, Leonardo Da Vinci's ideas, William Blake's poetry, and so on... Art is culture, and culture belongs to all.

In my little experience from six years of producing music myself, I have learned also that crediting samples is impossible. In Italy, in a production of about 2000 copies, for example, the societies that print CDs need a tax seal for each copy in order to legally print it. This tax must be paid to the national copyrights society (SIAE) and requires that you don't use samples on it unless you ask for permission. This brings us back to Oswald's ethics of not asking. I don't credit, otherwise I could not make any music... This buccaneer way of life is necessary. I'd like so much to say where my sample belongs, but I can't. My way of sampling transforms the previous material so much that the result is a completely new piece of music. In my opinion, actual copyright laws can't afford such new paradigms, since they are obsolete tools of pure commerce.

I could be a little malicious and say: my music *is* made thanks to other people's music. But I could say the same for them, since these people use previously 'patented' configurations or techniques, not to mention that they use the well tempered tuning system thanks to JS Bach. Again, I'm being provocative when I say that I do not mention sample credits just as rock bands do not mention Van Halen for hammer-on guitar techniques nor the guy who discovered the pentatonic scale. Nor have I seen Kraftwerk mentioning the Voder (vocoder) developers. I think most of you will get this irony... well, I hope so.

Giorgio Sancristoforo Milan, Italy

I am an active composer, arranger, and producer living and working here in New York City. I am writing in reference to your editorial regarding copyright law and John Oswald's work. One thing you did not acknowledge in your editorial is the fact that copyrighted music is used very regularly without permission by the very large corporate entities you and Oswald appear to be at odds with. Aaron Copland's music, for example, has been illegally used in television commercials. The copyright law can protect the music of a Copland or yours truly from being taken and used to sell planes, toothpaste, or whatever else without offering *any* compensation to the composers. Many of the artists in your magazine

Stylus is the project of Welsh experimentalist Dafydd Morgan. Now available from Ochre Records is the full set of Stylus Compact Disc albums released to date

stylus

The debut album by Stylus. The album featured tracks written about the last remaining seaweed collecting hut in Pembrokeshire, West Wales. Edwin Pouncey in The Wire stated: the listener is invited to envision the ruined hut at various stages of the year, as his electronic windstorm howls rhythmically around the flimsy structure. Bizarre as it sounds, the music is curiously moving and empathetic. Stewart Lee in The Sunday Times likened the album to 1997's Dutch Harbor, the Boxhead Ensemble's portrayal of an Alaskan fishing town.

the last seaweed collecting hut at freshweter west
ochre records OCH012L

Skomargraph musically draws its inspiration from Dafydd's field trips onto Skomer Island, situated off the West Wales coast in Pembrokeshire, and it's surrounding areas. Conjouring up the reclusive haunting emotive feelings within the music that is so evident from witnessing the beautiful landscape that has inspired the tracks on Skomargraph. Ptolemaic Terrascope stated: There's something desolate in the spare instrumentation which suggests a land of non abundance rather than one of milk and honey, whilst Planet added: As rad cell and beautiful are Euphotic and Coracle. As Flotsam and Sliom eye suggest, this is not merely an album of pretty pictures, yet it's minimalist music evokes what is, ultimately, a benevolent universe.

skomargraph
ochre records OCH023L

Mynydd Preseli (the Preseli Mountains) is a continuation on a theme and is the final part of a Pembrokeshire influenced trilogy. The Wire stated: Dafydd Morgan celebrates the landscapes of Pembrokeshire, it's biblical mountains, mossy hummocks and megaliths. The synthesized sounds are kept bubbling to a point where they draw the ear and the added ingredients are often well judged. Stewart Lee in his Sunday Times review concluded: But this isn't some Eno-style exercise in ambient moods. Morgan's minimal music demands to be heard.

mynydd preseli
mar//ino records MI003

The fourth album release from Stylus and one in which Morgan experiments with Heidelberg printing machines as backing tracks and also sees his music progress to one of natural beauty on the subject of wildlife on tracks such as Migration and The Cosmic Beekeeper. A fleeting glimpse of his Pembrokeshire influenced past is included on the track Slack Rock, whilst influence is also drawn on the emigration to Argentina of the early Welsh settlers in the 1850's in the two tracks written about Patagonia.

pedwer
fourth dimension records
FDCD64

The Archif 01 CD is the first in the Ochre Archive Series. This compilation pulls together all of the non album Stylus material that has been released to date on various labels since the debut release in April 1997 Kinski (a tribute to the late great actor Klaus Kinski) through to the Pluen Eira Ochre Christmas 7" in December 2000. The majority of tracks on Archif 01 appear for the first time on CD. Over 73 minutes long and includes an exclusive Longstone remix of Kinski.

erchif:01
ochre records OCH026L

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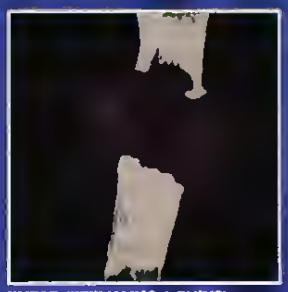

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have benefited from licensing out their music to film, television, dance companies, Internet sites and theatre groups. At my level, one might be able to eke out a living (and not – as the author of the Oswald article sneers, "get a proper job" – a proper job? What the fuck is that about?) by licensing their copyrighted music out to be used by other people. What on earth is wrong with that? And what is wrong with expecting my creative work to be protected? I appreciate the issues Oswald's work brings up (although his actual music drives me up the wall), but your view and his are misinformed and perpetuate several prejudices that artistís have to contend with in our current culture.
Chris Becker New York, USA

Of course legislation should be in place to protect your, or anyone else's work from wholesale, uncredited use for the commercial purposes you describe – in other words, a form of piracy which effectively wipes you out of the picture. The same laws regulate a market that rightly allows artists and publishers to license productions for such uses – the issue here is the 'fair dealing' which is outlined in the article. The question is whether work such as Oswald's, which has a far more ambiguous relationship to the source material, should be subject to precisely the same legislation. It is different because it doesn't replace the original material, but reconstructs it, questioning and commenting upon it.

The comment about "getting a proper job" was clearly an ironic, leading question intended to provoke Oswald into a response – Ed

I read with great interest the cover article on John Oswald. The editorial also said important things on the matter. I really wish the best success for the artist and his concept of creating music, pushing the limits even if he has to fight against an industry that only wants to protect its interests, no matter what. Quotation used to create something new is not stealing.

I thought that the only work of his that was available (in shops or on the Internet) was the *69/96* box set through Negativland. I was surprised when I found the *Plexure* CD in an alternative music shop in Lisbon called Ananana. Then I was told that it was available because it was released in Japan and then imported.

However, I would like to know if the other works by the same artist are still available anywhere or if they were prohibited because of 'copyrights and wrongs'. For example, *Grayfolded*.
Nello De Sousa Madeira, Portugal

Grayfolded: Transitive Axis was *originally released in 1994. The second part,* Mirror Ashes, *followed a year later. In 1999 the two parts were issued together as a double CD by Snapper Music – Ed*

Eat meat manifesto

As a regular reader and subscriber to *The Wire*, I feel I have the right to vent my opinion on some of its content. Namely the Death Row column. What is it with these meat-guzzling bastards? Previous participants like Alan Vega and Lydia Lunch want to see off their last moments on this world with the entrails of some innocent creature partially digesting within their own. And most recently, Mike Patton (*The Wire* 220), who would like to shuffle off this mortal coil with a "72 ounce" piece of cow flesh inside him. I suppose it could go some way to explaining why his Fantomas group are practically unlistenable (ditto the previous two). Jeezus! Speak to someone who adheres to a more enlightened lifestyle, why don't ya?
Gore D Laughlin via email

The Rockford files

Please let Peter Shapiro know (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 220): Cheap Trick are from Rockford, some way east of the Quad Cities (Davenport, to be exact), and its most famous musical export is cornet genius Bix Beiderbecke.
Neil via email

In penance Peter is currently lacerating himself with a jagged fragment of Styx's Pieces Of Eight *– Ed*

Not necessarily "hegemonic"

I would like to respond to Tom Perchard's review of *Leonardo Music Journal Vol 11: Not Necessarily "English Music"* (Print Run, *The Wire* 219). Perchard is, of course, entitled to his opinion that my depiction of British music of the 60s and 70s as a "Golden Age" is "specious". However, I fail to see what is so "authoritarian" and "hegemonic" about providing an opportunity for under-recognised artists to write about their own work. His accusation that we are "rewriting and controlling... history" by the "enforced exclusion of so many other sorts of musicians" suggests that he does not understand the editorial policies of *LMJ*.

Since its inception, *LMJ* has been devoted to writing by artists about their own work – articles by critics, musicologists and journalists are published only in rare circumstances (such as when the artist is dead, for example). As with the previous three issues, we chose a broad rubric (British music since 1960) and circulated a call for submissions as widely as possible: it was posted on several Websites, sent directly to dozens of artists, labels and music magazines, and even appeared in *The Wire*. We published every piece on the contemporary British music scene that we received. Any "exclusion" was self-imposed, not "enforced" by *LMJ*.

Curiously, Perchard seems to have enjoyed the magazine, describing various articles as "entertaining", "excellent", "well-researched and scholarly", all the while decrying a supposed, repressive "privileging of experiment". He suggests that the artists included are overly familiar "canonical entities". This may be true within Mr Perchard's circle, but *LMJ* has an international circulation. Having worked in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia, I can report that, far from being privileged, the experimental tradition in British music is largely unknown abroad.

The problem in contemporary music is not the privileging of experiment, but the privileging of ignorance. *Leonardo Music Journal* exists specifically as a venue for artists to address that ignorance. If that's hegemony, I can live with it.
Nicolas Collins River Forest, USA

Fad's passing

It was with dismay that I read in *The Wire* 219 of the untimely demise of Frank Tovey aka Fad Gadget. As a nipper I was dragged along to see Toyah Wilcox in Dublin. In support was Mr Tovey, who enthralled all and sundry with his 'tar 'n' feather' pubic hair-ripping routine. On that night, half a lifetime ago, it dawned on a precocious youth that 'music' per se did not have to be all asinine drivel, and that you could tread your own path regardless of trends, peers or whatever. Anyway, his passing makes me feel old... and all too mortal.
Johnny Dublin, Ireland

Breathe again

Dave Taylor (Letters, *The Wire* 219) may like to know that Brotherhood Of Breath's self-titled album on RCA Neon has been reissued on Italian label Akarma.
Martin Bender via email

Corrections
Issue 220 In The People Band feature the second photo from the left on page 45 showed Ian Jacobs (foreground) and Barry Pilcher, not Davey Payne. In Super_Collider's Invisible Jukebox, the introduction wrongly implied that Cristian Vogel's No Future organisation managed Si Begg and Neil Landstrumm; they are in fact masters of their own destiny. In On Location, a photo of trombonist Robert Jarvis was incorrectly captioned as Paul Rutherford.
Issue 219 In the John Oswald feature, Canadian film maker and pianist Michael Snow was wrongly described as American. In Ether Talk, a Miranda July photo was wrongly captioned as Marina Rosenfeld. The directory should have included these details for Stylus's *Mynydd Preseli*, reviewed in Outer Limits: Mar/ino, 12 Queen Terrace, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland Y525 1BE phil@elsieandjack.com

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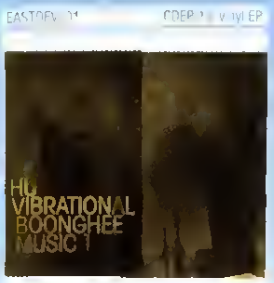

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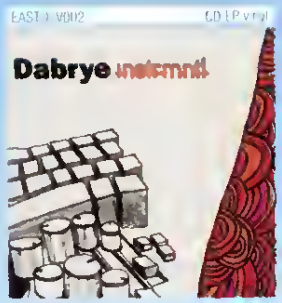

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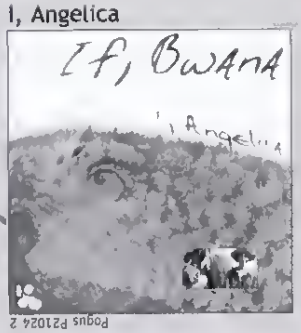

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Bitstream

News and more from under the radar. Compiled by The Trawler

Grand prix: Yasunao Tone

The Golden Nica (that's the first prize) in the Digital Musics category of this year's **Prix Ars Electronica**, which was judged in Linz, Austria in April (see *The Wire* 208), has been awarded to the Japanese composer Yasunao Tone. An original member of the Fluxus movement alongside Takehisa Kosugi, Yoko Ono and George Maciunas, Tone has been involved in experimental sound work since the early 1960s. The piece which won him the Golden Nica, "Man'Yo Wounded 2001", features his groundbreaking use of manipulated CDs, a medium he has been investigating since the early 1980s. In the same competition, which carries total prize money of EUR 20,000, Awards of Distinction went to the Lucky Kitchen duo of Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman, and the American computer music theorist and composer Curtis Roads, author of the recently published *Microsound* (MIT Press). Honorary mentions went to Anticon, Iancu Dumitrescu & Ana-Maria Avram, Goodiepal, Russell Haswell, Raz Mesinai, Francisco López, Berthold Oswald, Phoenecia, Marina Rosenfeld, Mika Taanila & Mika Vainio, CM Von Hausswolff and Stephan Wittwer (www.aec.at) >> The Belgian Sub Rosa label has acquired the audio archive of the original Velvet Underground percussionist and New York 60s counterculture polymath **Angus MacLise**, who died in Kathmandu in 1979. Containing spoken word pieces, tribal percussion workouts, minimalist performances, and collaborations with MacLise's former colleagues in The Theater Of Eternal Music, Tony Conrad and John Cale, the archive was handed over to the label by MacLise's family and his close friend, Gerard Malanga. Following the example of Tim Barnes's Quakebasket label, which has issued two collections of MacLise's music, *Invasion Of The Thunderbolt Pagoda* and *Brain Damage In Oklahoma City*, Sub Rosa plans to start releasing selections from the archive in the coming months >> US Techno label Framework Music has just released ***AfrikaAware***, a mix CD whose purpose is not just to rock dancefloors, but to raise awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic still sweeping Africa. Tracks have been donated by 37 electronica auteurs, including Surgeon, Steve Stoll, Justin Berkovi, Oliver Ho & James Ruskin, Neil Landstrumm and Diskordia. Profits will be donated to the Fountain of Hope, a Zambian community-based NGO which supports children who have been orphaned or made homeless by HIV/AIDS, civil conflict and poverty (www.afrikaaware.com) >> One of the more fugitive figures in the history of British experimental music, percussionist **Frank Perry**, emerges into the light this month via two archive releases. The FMR label's *Temple Of The Ancient Magical Presence* is a compilation of pieces from 1972-2000 that includes Perry's collaborations with Evan Parker, Paul Lytton, Paul Lovens, David Toop and Jin Hi Kim. Meanwhile, the Italian Qbico label has issued a vinyl picture disc album, *For The Love Of ...*, containing a duet between Perry and Parker recorded live in 1972 at London's Royal Commonwealth Society >> As the mid-60s home of the San Francisco Tape Music Center, where Pauline Oliveros, Morton Subotnick, Ramon Sender and others pioneered a freewheeling, DIY take on analogue synthesis, Oakland's Mills College is one of the holy sites in the church of electronic music. ***Music From Mills 2001*** is a new compilation that sets out to prove the college's faculty can still cut it in the digital domain. Among others, the CD features new music from Oliveros, Alvin Curran and Fred Frith, who is currently ensconced as the college's professor of composition (www.mills.edu) >> **London Modular** is a new online listings facility for electronic music events in the capital. Inspired by Chicago Modular, the first such modular, city-based online resource, the site is free to use for anyone who wants to post details about forthcoming electronic music events, including clubs, performances, installations, etc. The postings can then be navigated by day, month, artist, venue, keywords and so on (londonmodular.co.uk) >> The **Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft** duo of Gabi Delgado and Robert Gorl are due to play their first live set since 1986 in Berlin this month. The pioneers of sweat-soaked, bare-torso Electronic Body Music will be on stage at the city's Praxxiz club on 12 July (www.praxxiz.de) >> The ***Sun Ra Book 2003***, the *Sun Ra Research* fanzine's annual compendium of Ra-related arcana, is now available direct from the book's compilers, brothers John and Peter Hinds. Mail omnisonic@webtv.net for details >> Talking of fanzines, the second issue of the excellent New York free jazz/American primitive zine ***50 Miles Of Elbow Room*** is out now. The issue, printed in glorious monochrome, naturally, contains features on Hamid Drake (interviewed by the AUM Fidelity label's Steve Joerg), Reverend Charlie Jackson, Louis Moholo (interviewed by William Parker), Otha Turner & The Rising Star Fife And Drum Band, June Tyson and Robert Pete Williams. Mail milesofelbow@hotmail.com for information on how to get hold of a copy >> **Arthur Lyman**, one of the pioneers of post-war exotica and space age bachelor pad music, died in Honolulu, Hawaii in February. In the mid-50s, Lyman was a member of the group led by Martin Denny that laid the groundwork for the emergence of the exotica fad during its residency at Don The Beachomber's Tiki style night club in Hawaii. But he is best known for his 1957 album *Taboo*, which combined Polynesian rhythms, jungle ambience and cocktail lounge piano jazz to produce the perfect soundtrack for atomic age America. □

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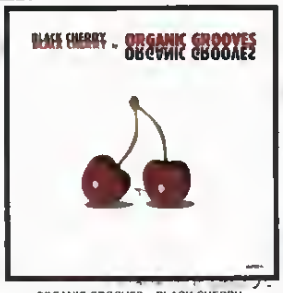

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GOODIEPAL/ MAINPAL INV

BRAND DISLOYALTY. BY JEROME MAUNSELL

"I am MTV, quiz shows, Queen and Microsoft on the inside," says the enigmatic Danish electronic musician Kristian Vester, aka Goodiepal/Mainpal Inv, "or at least I am a product of that." Attempting to define the peculiar amalgam of unconscious influences that have helped shape his extraordinary soundworld is no easy task. "I try to do music that speaks for itself and somehow is responsible to itself," he offers. "I don't want to try and go out and fake some kind of output. My music represents the rise of the New Europe, and I hope it speaks a language of origin, big companies, expanding, computing, banishment and fatal numbness."

Listening to his surreal, heartfelt and deeply unhinged work for the first time suggests all that and more. His recent *Narc Beacon* CD for Ski-pp, the label run by French group DAT Politics, collects up disparate tracks that have emerged over the past few years, scattered across a variety of small electronica labels. For instance, several cuts are included from the notorious Goodiebag/Demonbag 7"series he put out with Mancunian pranksters V/VM. On the first few spins, the disc feels like a sonic translation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*. It's an immersive, disorientating trip that marries *Sgt Pepper*-esque chunks of psychedelic digitalia, jaunty folk jigs, children's TV jingles, baroque music box follies and indescribable sonic oddities.

Repeated plays unveil layers of plaintive melodies, touchingly infantile but soulful at the same time. Vester says he spent his childhood "doing three things: playing role playing games, video games and painting Citadel miniatures and tin toys in general", before going to a strict religious school where "computers, calculators, Walkmen, Game & Watch games or just ordinary talk about pop music was forbidden. But to me that just made them much more interesting." His first experiments in music were made possible by the 'Sid' chip of the vintage Commodore 64 computer in the 1980s (by which time he was already calling himself the Goodiepal), although he advanced to an Amiga around 1989. Later, he was inspired by experimental Techno, particularly that of Irdial label boss Akin Fernandez, and Cologne's Wolfgang Voigt, aka Mike Ink.

Then Mainpal Inv appeared. In a switch mysteriously reminiscent of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Vester is coy about where The Goodiepal stops and Mainpal Inv takes over, although we are told that the Goodiepal won't resurface fully until June 2003, "for personal reasons". Likewise, much of his music has a double life which, if not exactly secret, has often been shrouded in rumour. It transpires that apart from his activities as Goodiepal/Mainpal Inv, Vester has worked on and off since 1998 for a number of corporations, mostly a "global entertainment marketing company" called Propaganda Gem, who place products, for a sizeable fee, in the world of entertainment, mainly in Hollywood films, TV, video games and music videos.

In his corporate guise, Vester first did sound work for an advert branding both the Warner Bros film *The Matrix* along with Nokia. After some success with consumers, he went on to do the trailer for *Charlie's Angels*, and jingles for Carlsberg, Bang & Olufsen, Hitachi and Universal Music, to name a few. There's also his Website work, including the eye-watering technicolour visuals, puzzles and games of the Maxx Maracas Club site (www.chupachups.com). His last such project was sound design for a TV ad branding the new Nokia 7050 mobile phone for Europe and the 9210 communicator for America via Steven Spielberg's adaption of paranoid sci-fi don Philip K Dick's *The Minority Report*. Indeed, one wonders whether Dick, with his love of conspiracy theories, would have appreciated the irony of posthumously taking part in such insidious new forms of mental programming.

The topsy-turvy creative connections Vester makes between the worlds he moves in are where things start getting really interesting. "All the music on the 7"s are 'dub' versions of audio icons used in some way to brand products of the respected companies," he explains. "The 'Nokia' flute, for example, has actually been used by Nokia to promote themselves, just like the small sequences on the flipside have been. Then they are modulated by me and become the 'Mainpal inverted Brands'. I call it dub music, just like Joe Meek to me was a dub producer or engineer if you like, a man whose work is to transform recorded material into a new context where the work gets modified and hopefully even works better than it originally did."

Vester's employers aren't always exactly delighted with the results of such subversive activities. He hasn't always asked permission to use 'their' sounds and logos. "The Nokia 7" was nothing too serious, and I still work for them so it's not that hard!" he comments.

Ongoing projects listed on his Website include the Codebreaker, a baffling graphic message board/links page, and Goodiepal 2003, a "new musical language" set for completion next year, inspired in part by the new generation of robotic Lego toys. "I am working on a brick based musical programming language but it will be much more like a game," he explains. "The Lego Lab in Århus and the work of [Lego inventor] Ole Caprani was fascinating for a while, although it seems like Caprani's idea of 'thinking robots' is much more advanced than Lego's."

Is this a sonic take on subvertising or just mischievous sabotage? Vester seems to be playing a much more complex, ambiguous game, but he won't be pinned down on the subject. Asked if he is trying to make any explicit statement, Vester points out,"The companies or products that I label with my music have been very personal, companies or products that I find myself connected to in some squelchy way. I can't stand people working on stuff and, due to a consumer way of thinking, limiting the final product afterwards so it will only be able to do what the inventors think that people want to do with the product.

"I think I am hunting for action," he concludes. "Not in a sports and 'have fun' way but in a 'go fill out my whole mind' way of seeing things. I like to get stressed out and I like when things kind of take over."

Goodiepal/Mainpal Website. www.datanom.com/mainpal

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DJ /RUPTURE

SENDING OUT AN SOS. BY HUA HSU

In 1998, Harvard student Jace Clayton was fed up – he wanted to keep his campus rich, white and straight. At least that's what he and his campus political cell, Strategic Offense Systems (SOS), wished a particularly classist, racist and homophobic high-profile professor at Harvard to believe. During the busiest week on campus, SOS staged a demonstration that Clayton recalls as being "somewhere between direct action protests and burlesque theatre". They invented a dummy organisation called the Harvard Heritage Society, and during the professor's first day of lectures, presented him with a large bouquet of flowers and the "Heinrich Himmler Award for Social Excellence", while unsuspecting fellow students and tipped-off campus reporters looked on. The jig was up moments later when planted SOS operatives – "a mongrel crowd, equal parts raggedly polyethnic and glamorously queer," as Clayton describes it – leapt from their seats and marched around the lecture hall carrying signs and banners (sample slogan: 'Keep Harvard White"). It was both a direct and subtle strike against the professor's defiant ignorance. "Plus," adds Clayton, who today records under the name DJ /Rupture, "it was funny."

What makes Clayton so proud about this anecdote is its stylised approach. This commingling of confrontation and subversion has also distinguished his two mixes – last year's CD-R-only *Gold Teeth Thief* and the upcoming *Minesweeper Suite* – and his tiny, Madrid-based Soot label. He's a polyglot wondering aloud, mashing up Timbaland and Tigerbeat6, dancehall yardcore and squalls of Industrial noise. The way Clayton tells it, there are no beginnings or endings to his mixes; instead they are "free and open, just like the way sound enters your ear: all at once".

Clayton was first inspired to organise noise as a young teen growing up on the outskirts of Boston, Massachusetts. He would stay up late to tape shows of the city's many college radio stations, adding to his knowledge of experimental noise and sound art, Detroit Techno and early Industrial music. It was a good education, and one that left plenty of mystery and drama intact. The DJs rarely announced the tracks, and their sets were treated as freeform on-air experiments. "I would hear music without knowing its source, without necessarily knowing its context," he recalls. "That's how I would play it when I had my own radio show five years later, not based on packaging or crowd expectations or social alignments or whatever."

Though he had been debuting his experimental mixes on radio for a while, it wasn't until he caught onto the kidney-punch brutality of the heaviest, rawest Jungle that /Rupture decided to transfer his operation to the DJ booth. His approach was summarised in the title of his first mixtape: *1+1=3*. Mixes had to be more than the sum of their parts.

Around 1996, Clayton found some likeminded artists and musicians from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and together they formed The Toneburst Collective, named after a Stereolab single. The group threw inexpensive parties and sponsored events that were meant to be informative but fun. Their only release – a self-titled 1997 compilation on Boston's Bliss label – was amateurish and raw, but captured the sound of a bunch of friends fascinated with openended dancefloor politicking. Clayton's contribution was the appropriately titled "Broken Beats", a disorienting chop job isolating the push from the pull of a vicious Jungle rhythm. Broken and staggered, the reconfigured parts came together to tell a totally different story.

In 1999, having relocated to Madrid, Spain, Clayton founded Soot Records, a label that showcases his own work as well as those with similar political and artistic leanings. "As a label head I'm interested in music from people who have a serious understanding of digital audio programming *and* non-Western musical traditions, an understanding that informs the very structure of their compositions, rather than just sampling Ravi Shankar. I'm after a ruffneck syncretism, dirty sounds with history under their fingernails." Accordingly, Soot's approach is summarized by its tagline, "A strike against geography": "I was producing the first Nettle EP at the time I coined the phrase. It was this rugged local music from a place – some illicit place between deep Brooklyn, southern Spain and North Africa – that didn't physically exist. But I felt at home there."

His mixes are the product of two ears that hear things differently. Most listeners first encountered this on the opening to *Gold Teeth Thief* (2000), in which Missy Elliott's ubiquitous "Get Ur Freak On" gave ground to the slow but certain encroachments of Nas's "Oochie Wally" instrumental. Many mistook this for a cheeky joke – a clever DJ's sleight of hand at the expense of the mainstream bling set – until /Rupture's shift to DJ Scud's totalizing "Badman Time" a few minutes later confirmed the larger project. When most DJs mix, the aim is to blend and maintain whatever rhythmic pace has been established. For /Rupture, mixes are manifestos that dart, bob and clash in tempo and continent because that's what life does. He explains: "One great thing about DJing is that you can superimpose several different tracks and instead of getting chaos, they can multiply into something much stronger and stranger than what you began with. [Harvard professor and electronic composer] Ivan Tcherepnin called this ability of sound 'interpenetration without interference'. But I love the moments of interferences and noise too."

/Rupture's meticulously beatmatched juxtapositions give equal footing to their African, European, American and Arabic parts. Within the soundclashes – Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly" picking its way from beneath the breakbeat violence of Eitherherd; whiteboy Cex accompanying Country roughs Eightball & MJG – there's always a larger narrative arc in the background. Like his days spent invading lecture halls, it's a serious and thoughtful pursuit, but not without a fun catch: "It's political, yes, but I'm not about preaching. I fear every type of flag, anything that simplifies a complex situation. I cycle through varying beats and textures – a lot of them coming from black folks and other people who aren't really represented or taken seriously in other media – and try to highlight this serious, committed vibe. It's party music but it's anything but escapist." □ *Minesweeper Suite is released this month on Tigerbeat6. Soot Website: reliq.net/soot*

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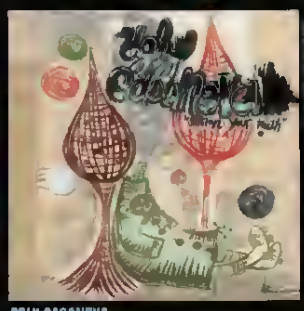

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AL MARGOLIS

CALL ME IF, BWANA. BY DAVE MANDL

Sounding like an archaic echo, If, Bwana could be the title of a Bob Hope-Bing Crosby vehicle that never got made. A little investigation reveals it as the oddly worded alias of Al Margolis, who is perhaps better known as a tireless activist in the 1980s American cassette underground and, later, as the co-founder of experimental music label Pogus Productions. Derived from an acronym for It's Funny, But We Are Not Amused, the name sticks out like a cartoon-swollen sore thumb alongside such artists as AMM, Morphogenesis and Pauline Oliveros in the Pogus catalogue, but the music more than holds its own. Essentially comprising Margolis plus occasional contributions from friends, If, Bwana has been active since 1984, making music that has swung between spontaneous studio constructions and more process-oriented composition. His latest release, the double CD *I, Angelica*, leans more in the former direction. The grinding, textural soundscape, "Guitars By Al", is simply eight tracks of overdubbed guitar sped up, slowed down and processed in different ways. "Goo Pond" is built around a recording made during a walk through the woods near Margolis's new home in the small town of Chester, New York. The darkly abrasive drone of "The Railway Station Fire", meanwhile, recalls the kind of music he used to champion through his cassette label Sound Of Pig in the 1980s.

Back then, a high proportion of the world's most adventurous and downright bizarre music was found on tapes circulating around the International Cassette Network, an anarchic web of home tapers inspired by the post-punk DIY ethos and easy access to now-affordable professional calibre home studio gear. As proprietor of Sound Of Pig Music, Margolis released an incredible 301 cassettes between 1984 and 1991. Among the multitude of sound explorers and industrialists in SOP's catalogue were such future celebrities as multi-instrumentalist Amy Denio, French über-eccentric Costes and Japanese noise giant Merzbow. In part thanks to an understanding boss, Margolis ran his New York based label singlehandedly while holding down a day job as a shipping clerk. He recalls, "I had three cassette decks running in the back all the time, dubbing tapes. In one year – it must have been 87 or 88 – I sent out 3300 cassettes. All dubbed by hand."

In 1989, he teamed up with composers Dave Prescott and Gen Ken Montgomery to form the non-cassette label Pogus. Two years later, after a handful of releases – new recordings by English experimental outfit Morphogenesis and steel cello player Robert Ruttman, previously unreleased material by AMM and Swedish avant garde composer Rune Lindblad – Prescott and Montgomery quit, leaving the label in Margolis's hands. His cassette network activities were winding down at the time – "It just got harder and harder to do," he sighs, "there were less people active in the network, and the magazines that were supporting it were gone". Even so, he was in no position to release any new Pogus CDs for a few years. "I didn't have money," he explains. "I was still working a shipping job. So it was a semi-dormant time."

After managing to fund a few Pogus discs on his own – including releases by California noise artists Big City Orchestra and avant jazz trio Trigger – Margolis experienced a career change that improved the label's finances. He took a job at New World Records and eventually rose to A&R Director before leaving to work as a freelance label manager for several small experimental labels. An odd incident at New World put him in touch with Belgian composer Leo Kupper, who later released the CD *Electro-Acoustic* on Pogus. "I knew his stuff from an old avant garde record on Deutsche Grammophon," Margolis recalls. "One day he sent a package to New World which supposedly had four DATs in it, and the package arrived empty. The DATs had fallen out. But I recognised the name, and so I got in touch with him and said, 'We [New World] don't do non-American music, but *I* have a label, and I'd be interested'."

In addition to drawing attention to composers "who are a little more obscure – people who are not as prominent as others and haven't had quite as much stuff out there" such as American maverick Kenneth Gaburo or a compilation of South American electroacoustics, one of Pogus's goals has been the rescue of worthy older or forgotten recordings, like Pauline Oliveros's *Alien Bog/Beautiful Soop*, which contains two early electronic/tape experiments. "I tried raising money for that at New World for three years," Margolis says, "and they just wouldn't do it. So I said 'Fuck it, I'll do it myself'." Pogus's latest release, *All Known All White* by American composer Roger Reynolds (reviewed in *The Wire* 220), originally came out on CRI, who had let it slip out of print. "CRI had so much of his stuff in the can, they weren't getting around to that one," Margolis says.

As for If, Bwana's music, Margolis has taken it in a more composed direction. "When I was a shipping guy and had absolutely no responsibility," he says, "I used to spend all day thinking about my music. I could go into the studio and I'd have the piece in my head. It was almost done." But after getting a 'real' job, there was less time for daydreaming: "You're [only] thinking about your music on the walk to work, and the walk back, and the train. So instead of eight hours it's two hours. So I found myself over time getting into the studio almost having to compose there. But now that I'm working out of the house and I don't have to travel as much, I'm a little more back into pre-composition." □ *If, Bwana's* I, Angelica *and Roger Reynolds's* All Known All White *are out now. Pogus Website: www.pogus.com*

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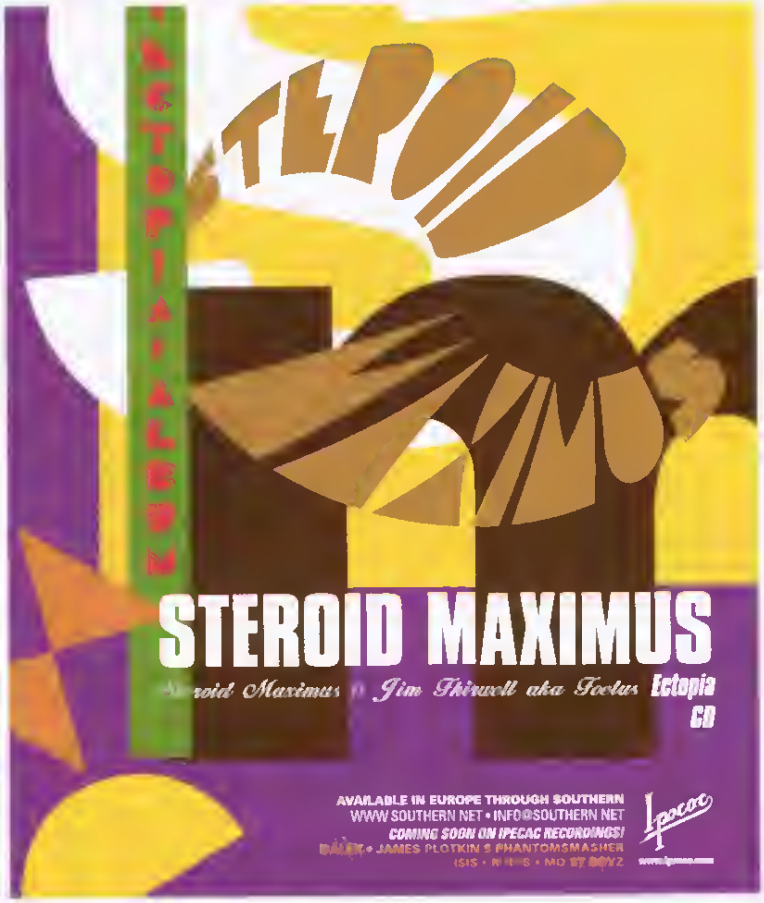
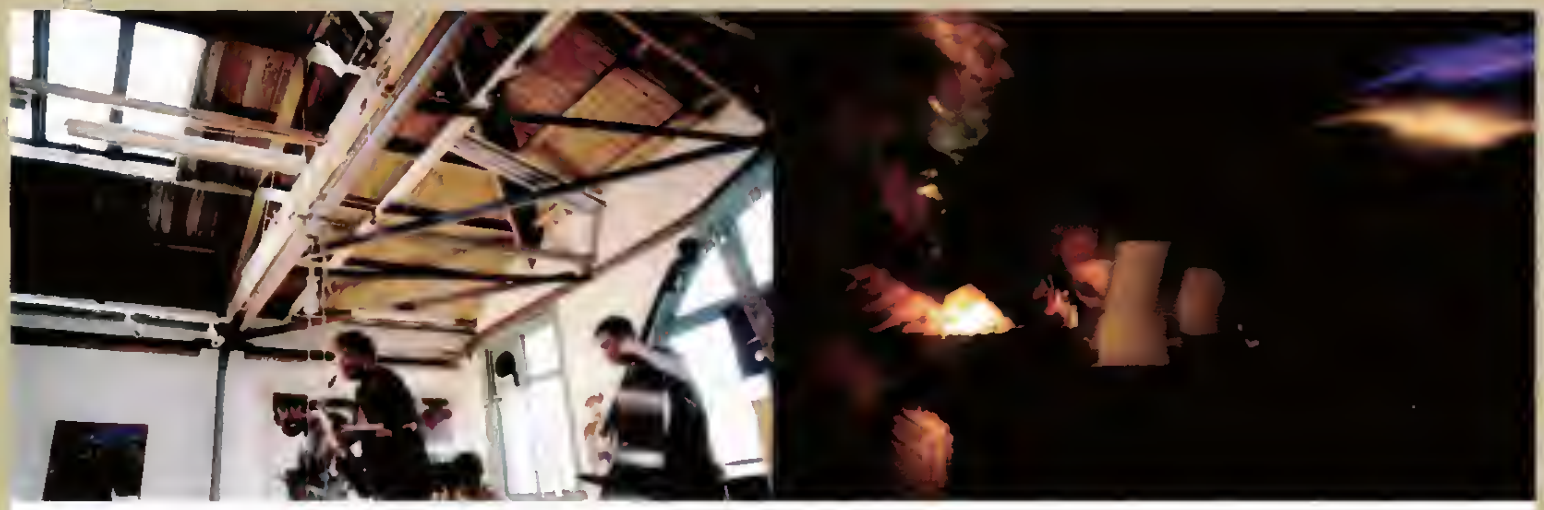


Global Ear: Wellington

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Creative isolation is throwing up new free music spaces in New Zealand's capital. By David A Edwards



Left: The Ecstasy Trio (Jeff Henderson, Chris O'Connor and Tom Callwood) live at The Space in Wellington. Right: Birchville Cat Motel

For New Zealand's local musicians, the country's isolation is often perceived as one of its strengths. Local artforms appear, and occasionally flourish independently from stylistic waves occurring overseas. The flipside, however, is the difficulty for New Zealand artists of finding an audience. While there are and always have been individuals doing their own thing, it is only when enough groups emerge to form a movement that enough critical mass is achieved for it to become known. Hence such loose and misleading international shorthands as 'The Dunedin Sound'.

In the capital Wellington, another distinctive movement has been coalescing over the past five years. Musicians from jazz, free improvisation, modern composition, noise, punk and theatre backgrounds have been throwing themselves together and trading ideas at The Space, an independent artist-run venue which has been offering an alternative music haven for just over two and a half years. The resulting musical hybridity has been called the 'Space Sound'.

Jeff Henderson, the manager/curator of The Space, and a saxophonist, pianist and composer of growing stature, began his career in the early 90s studying jazz. As a non-native artform, the usual function of jazz in NZ is as a kind of glorified dinner music. Henderson's tastes ran more towards Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, and Anthony Braxton. His principal local influences were the leftover musicians from early 80s jazz modernists The Six Volts and The Primitive Art Group, who played in various permutations about once a month. Henderson formed and toured with the group Syzygy, whose 1997 album *Tongue Grooves* was compared favourably by critics to Zappa and Zorn. After a year or two of putting on improv gigs in bars and art galleries, and inspired by New York loft venues, The Space opened in September 1999 as a combination performance venue, art gallery, and health massage clinic. It has since diversified further into a bookshop, coffee bar and Website.

The opening of The Space coincided with the Wellington Jazz Festival. Saxophonist Evan Parker, one of the international headliners, came by and spent an evening jamming with local players in front of a packed house. He also performed his concert with Richard Nunns, musicologist, player of traditional NZ Maori instruments, and longtime Parker fan. The concert recording has since been released as *Rangirua*, on Leo. The theory according to Jeff Henderson was, "If we're going to bring people from the States or from Europe all the way out to NZ, we didn't really want them to just do a gig and then bugger off like it was any old date anywhere in the world. It didn't seem worth the artists' while, or our while. We always wanted to initiate some kind of collaboration that would challenge or interest them, and maybe recognise that there are some important things going on here." In this case the challenge was to unite Parker's highly evolved and expansive style with Nunns's eerily evocative but dynamically and tonally limited woodwinds, gourds, shells, and jade percussion.

The same philosophy led to American pianist Marilyn Crispell being imported as part of Henderson's Urban Taniwha 2000 big band, along with Nunns and around 15 other local instrumentalists. The Taniwha is a Maori mythical beast, and Maori mythology and atmospheres were the canvas for a driving big band concert. The group tour of NZ's North Island was an artistic and popular success, for which Crispell is scheduled to return this year.

International collaborations such as these serve to illustrate the quality of talent here but may also be necessary in helping the music, which has remained largely invisible overseas, find its niche among the international music scene. London recordings of Henderson and bassist Tom Callwood with English drummer Mark Sanders are due out later this year, with Marilyn Crispell, Richard Nunns, and William Parker collaborations to follow, while The Space's own label, Space CDs, is putting out CD-R releases. "The fact that we're so far away and not performing regularly in Europe is a bit of a hurdle [to international releases]," says Henderson, "and there's also the time and energy and the financial hurdle – the musicians are still paying for everything. There is no industry here for modern music."

The recordings are only coming out now after a period of frequent live performance at The Space, which is sustained by the presence of a large pool of players in Wellington. Henderson says that one of the best things about The Space has been watching the standard [and number] of performers steadily increase. "The music's definitely got better and better. We're not unique in the world but we certainly are here – there's nowhere else that would let me play solo for two hours and turn off the coffee machine." The infrequency of the releases to date is partly due to a conscious decision to wait until the music has reached a high enough standard and found its own voice, and a prioritisation of live performance.

If there is a common theme running through the Space releases, it would seem to be the crossing of stylistic and cultural boundaries through improvisation. Releases to date have included collaborations with Dutch electronics duo Sync, Indonesian percussionist Agus Supriawan, and with local Campbell Kneale, whose Birchville Cat Motel noise project (on the Corpus Hermeticum label) attempts to create "a new soul music... representative of the inherent spirituality of suburbia" through the use of household objects and found sound sources. This is not any kind of 'postmodern eclecticism', but rather a part of the local improvisation ethic. As guitarist Chris Palmer explains, "The greater the population, the more you can specialise as a rule – and we can't really specialise at this point. But it can be itself a kind of uniqueness when you put together musics with different philosophical motivations that would normally never get played together by people who are more ideologically motivated – I think that's a strength."

The Space is integral to this process, as musicians who, a few years ago, could only perform irregularly in public, and sometimes struggled to find others to jam with, now have a base which contrasts from the beer-before-band priorities of most venues in town. There has been a gradual snowballing effect as the scene has come together. "It doesn't mean that there's a huge audience for improvised music five or six nights a week in a small town," says Henderson, "but it's definitely got a presence that it never had, and that's hopefully going to continue to grow." ☐ *New CDs by The Rubbernecks and Richard Nunns are released soon on Space CDs. Website: www.thespace.co.nz*

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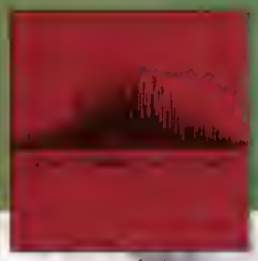

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Simon Fisher Turner

Tested by Mike Barnes. Photos by Frank Bauer

Multi-instrumentalist composer, sound collagist and occasional vocalist Simon Fisher Turner's first taste of showbiz came as a child actor in the 1960s. In 1969, he made an inauspicious start to a music career with an album, *Simon Turner*, under the direction of impresario/producer Jonathan King. When his attempted launch as a teen idol failed, however, he went back to acting for a number of years – although he did perform with The Portsmouth Sinfonia at The Royal Albert Hall in 1974. Towards the end of the decade, his increasingly experimental direction secured him a tenure as Musician in Residence at London's ICA in 1980.

Starting out as a runner on the 1979 film *The Tempest*, Turner began a fruitful association with its director Derek Jarman. He went on to compose soundtracks to such Jarman films as *Caravaggio* (1986), *The Last Of England* (1987), *The Garden* (1990) and *Edward II* (1991). In Jarman's final film, *Blue* (1993) – essentially the dying director's meditation on Aids and death spoken over a blank blue screen – Turner's soundscape provided the sole 'action'. Since Jarman's death, Turner has continued composing for film and TV, soundtracking such late 90s releases as Mike Hodges's *Croupier* and Anna Campion's *Loaded*. Other collaborative ventures include dance pieces written for choreographer Rosemary Butcher.

Parallel to his soundtrack work, Fisher continued his love of pop music in albums on Creation and Mike Alway's Ėl and Cherry Red labels. These include his 1980s releases *The Royal Bastard* and *Sir*, made as The King Of Luxembourg; and as late as 1999 he stepped out as Loveletter, with an album called *Beethoven Chopin Kitchen Fraud*. Other aliases have included Monday Sinclair and his cross-dressing duo with Colin Lloyd Tucker, Deux Filles.

As SFT, Turner composed/collaged the albums *Shwarma* (1996) and *Oh Venus* (1999). Using ideas and techniques evolved through his soundtracks and live versions of *Blue*, he augmented a wide range of conventional instruments with loops, treatments and his own 'life recordings'. Collaborators on his new album *Swift*, released this month on Mute, include Gilad Atzmon on reeds, Aki Onda and Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Wales. Presently he is recording a soundtrack for Jean Genet's 1950 film *Un Chant O'Amour*. The Jukebox took place at Turner's home in South London.

DAVID BOWIE
"I FEEL FREE"
FROM *RARESTONEBOWIE* (GOLDEN YEARS) 1972

Oh, it's Bowie! It's from the Marquee or somewhere like that?

It's from a gig at Kingston Polytechnic in 1972.

Blimey. So [it's Mick] Ronson on guitar. Is there a solo? Great, we're rocking already. I first saw them at University of London Union and they were all wearing these beautiful matador outfits. Changed my life completely. Amazing. The best live band of the day, incredibly exciting. He used to come onstage and say, 'Hi, my name's David Bowie, these are The Spiders From Mars, and this is the slickest show in town'.

All the kids in my school who liked Bowie thought that Ronson looked even more exotic, as well as being one of the best rock guitarists of the era. He was the sexiest guitarist in the world, and so much more than a guitarist: an arranger, a great producer, backing vocalist, played the flute and recorder, and was classically trained. I used to know him really quite well. Very down to earth, always smoked Old Holborn. Always rolled his own.

Years ago, I liked his sister Maggie very much and we hung out. Unfortunately his own records were never as good as the live sound. He was a great sideman and a great showman and a great talent but he was almost too nice. A gentleman – there's a good word for him. [Referring to his solo] Lethal! Brilliant sound. I love playing guitar and love that 'siren' guitar effect.

On your debut solo album in 1969 you did a version of Bowie's "The Prettiest Star".

It's odd because Bowie wasn't really popular then. The songs were chosen for me, I had no input whatsoever. The music was ready, so I came and sang the songs and did three or four a day. I suppose Jonathan King must have played me Bowie's version, but I wasn't really into Bowie at that age. I had to see the band before I finally understood it.

How did you end up being touted as a child star?

I was acting on TV and one of the actors knew of Jonathan, and said he was starting up a label. I met him and he said, 'Do you want to make a record?' and I said, 'Yeah, sure', because you're not going to say no. At least I started off doing something: I learnt how *not* to make a record.

BRIAN ENO
"SLOW WATER"
FROM *MUSIC FOR FILMS* (EG) 1978

[Immediately] It's got to be somebody like Eno. Is it a Frippertronic thing? [Fripp & Eno's] *Evening Star*?

Fripp collaborates on this track but it's actually from one of Eno's solo albums.

I recognise it. Hmm... it sounds awfully familiar. You know that I'll know it.

It's on Brian Eno's *Music For Films*, from 1978.

Oh, [as used in Derek Jarmans's film] *Jubilee*. I saw Eno with Roxy Music and his troublesome meanderings were brilliant. I think he's a great ideas man and I look forward to interviews with him – he always talks about somebody you've never heard of. I'm a great admirer of his collaborations and he's a great one for introducing you to other people's work. The album he did with John Cale [*Wrong Way Up*] was wonderful, an incredible album. He seems to be very mathematical in his way of thinking but the result, musically, isn't mathematical.

Eno gave us his studio in Woodbridge to record the music for [Jarman's] *Blue*, for which I'm eternally grateful.

You composed a number of soundtracks for Jarman's films. How did that start?

First it started with *Sloane Square*, a Super 8 film of his, about eight minutes long, and I did it at home on a borrowed four track cassette machine, plus a radio, bass guitar, electric guitar and a Wasp synthesizer.

When it came to doing *Caravaggio* [in 1986], I was looking after tapes which composers had sent in to the production office while we were shooting. We came to the end and he said, 'What are the tapes like?' I said, 'There are a couple we should really listen to,' and we went to see a couple of composers. Then he went off to Italy to get some sounds and came back and said, 'Why don't you do it?' I said, 'As long as we use real instruments I'll be happy.'

I did a demo which of course was electronic and Derek hated it. And I didn't really like it, so we went back to proper instruments. I'd never done the music for a movie before, I had no idea. I just had to ask people really. It was good, throwing you in the deep end. It gave me a chance; it's as simple as that really. It was very good of him to give me a break. He changed my life completely, let's not put too fine a point on it: the world of Derek's films and art, and music, and knowledge. He was such a wise man.

DOME
"BA-DR"
FROM *DOME 3* (MUTE) 1981

Is it German?

No. A clue: it features someone you've worked with.

Oh God! I sort of recognise the guitar. I haven't got a clue. Thomas Leer? No, I think you've spun past me on this one.

It's a dance piece, sort of, by Dome. It featured in their *Mzui* installation at the Waterloo Gallery in 1981, a tongue in cheek idea of the way Douglas Bader, the British second world war fighter pilot and amputee, might have danced. Visual artist Russell Mills danced it with a walking stick.

This is where I came in. I went to this because I was working for Cherry Red and Mike Alway put the *Mzui* album out on Cherry Red [in 1982] and it was brilliant. I met them and introduced myself. I must admit I missed out on *Pink Flag*. Once they had broken up [reformed] and started recording for Mute later on, that's when I really loved them.

Was the *Mzui* installation *a* success?

It was a big empty space about three or four storeys high. There were bits of wire stretched and you could ping them, and there were things you could hit. You could shout, scream, whatever you liked. They were making noises and music in a room at the back, and there were broken bottles on the floor you could kick around. I've always liked that – a good interactive sound/art thing. I think it was up for a couple of weeks, so I presume they took the tapes and made an album out of it. It's a document you could help make, if you could be bothered to go along and contribute. I'm a big fan of that sort of thing but I don't do it myself. Somebody's got to and I'm glad they did.

Bruce [Gilbert] is brilliant, I really like his work ethic. When we first worked together on *Shwarma*, I said thanks for coming along, and he said 'Oh, it's all right, I won't take very long, only a couple of hours'. I went for a walk and when I came back he had done whatever he was going to do and it sounded great. I don't know what he did. But he did it [laughs].

I gave him stuff to destroy for [1999's] *Oh Venus*. He came in at just the right moment. We were working on ProTools at the very end. We'd finished mixing and we were putting it all together again. He came in with a DAT of four tracks which he had scrunched as only Bruce can. He put them in his shed and 'shedded them up' and applied whatever he applies. And it was just great. You can always rely on Bruce. He's a tall man and very dry.

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD
"PUBLIC IMAGE"
FROM *PUBLIC IMAGE LTD (FIRST EDITION)* (VIRGIN) 1978

[Bass comes in] Public Image, I've got this on vinyl. I've got it with the newspaper [sleeve inset] and all. Adorable. It's a brilliant single. The whole sound is just beautiful, everything about it. I was such a fan.

What did you think of the first album?

I never really got into the albums. I got *Metal Box*. I've always listened to them from a distance, but this I bought when it first came out. I was doing a play in Liverpool at the time by Peter Gill and somebody was doing a version of [Mike Leigh's play] *Abigail's Party* upstairs, and they needed a record to play coming from a neighbour next door. I said you should play this; if you want a 'noisy neighbour band', this would be the band to upset all of you.

What were you doing when punk broke?

When punk came out I really liked The Sex Pistols. I saw them by accident at [North London's] Screen On The Green, and a friend of mine used to work at EMI and introduced me to the singles. They were around for so little time. They were only around for a summer really and then they were gone. It was brilliant. The Pistols' singles are incredible. "Holidays In The Sun" is a vicious sound. They still sound better than ordinary 25 years later. I used to work in a restaurant kitchen in Mayfair and would go to the Roxy and see all these bands who were just starting up: ATV, X-Ray Spex and The Heartbreakers.

I liked John Lydon's attitude. That was someone I learned from. Even in his new interviews he's saying interesting things. He's not being provocative, he's saying sensible things: 'Use your brain, don't be a sheep, just get on with it.' It made me stick to my guns musically, because when all that was happening I was stuck in a little room with black bin liners covering the walls – it was very sad – and a two track Revox tape recorder. I was into slow, quiet, invisible music when all the bands were going [shouts] 'One-two-three-four...' He said stick with your beliefs. Believe, believe, believe. And I did, and it paid off.

WALTER RUTTMANN
"WEEKEND"
FROM *AN ANTHOLOGY OF NOISE & ELECTRONIC MUSIC* (SUB ROSA) 1930, RERELEASED 2002

Good God. No idea. It's cut-up stuff. Is it very old? Is it Pierre Henry, a musique concrète thing? Stockhausen?

It was made in 1930.

I don't know, but I admire the razorblade. It's great though, I'll cope with it. I wish I'd heard this when I was 16.

It's Walter Ruttmann, the German avant garde film maker. This was one of the first ever sound collages, made to accompany a radio 'film' without pictures called *Weekend*.

[Looks at CD] I've never heard of him. Played with a blank screen? How wonderful. I was going to buy this CD, funnily enough. I don't actually know a lot of these early recordings at all. I like this pure cut-up of sound, although I find it very difficult to do myself.

You've made music from a number of different sound sources, but have you made any from cut-ups?

I haven't been brave enough to just cut. If you get rough tapes and cut roughly like you really don't care... because once you start caring too much you think, 'If only I'd moved it a little bit this way or that', it almost loses its edge. This isn't randomly cut, it's quite deliberately put together, but I wonder what his first effort was like when he was not thinking about it? I can play you something afterwards. I've cut something from my earliest recordings from 1969 to this year into a 22 minute piece – my life in 22 minutes. I've tried to develop it and make it into something else. It's not just straight cut, cut, cut. It's not rough at all really, it's well honed – possibly too much. I guess people still do it these days but not as roughly. I don't know musique concrète well to listen to, but again it is one of those great ideas which was influential to me because it's just such a good thing to do – and fun as well.

Going on from the blank screen idea, how did *Blue* being just a blue screen affect your approach to the soundtrack?

We knew how long the film would be and so we had to place the words first. The words only came to about 20 minutes long and the film was 75 minutes long, so the engineer and I had to place the words where we thought they should be and then looked at the silence. We started with a minute and a half's silence, then put the first of Derek's poetry in, listened back and thought, 'How long shall we play?' Then stopped the tape and put some more words there. The words and the silences just gave us the music, the blueness gave us... nothing [laughs]. It just gave us a blank blue stare. That was my favourite film to work on. What a great idea.

RICHARD HOROWITZ
"FEVER RIDE"
FROM *THE SHELTERING SKY* OST (VIRGIN) 1990

We seem to have picked some difficult ones.

You have, haven't you? Is it genuine? It's made up. Jon Hassell? I certainly don't know. It's so simple it sounds like Jah Wobble but it's not moving enough. Is it on Real World? It's ethnic-y, but false ethnic-y.

It's a soundtrack.

Not Scorsese's Jesus Christ thing. Oh dear. Nil points!

It's from Bertolucci's *The Sheltering Sky*. This section of music is by Richard Horowitz.

I went to see it with [actress] Tilda Swinton and I was very disappointed with the film. I thought it was quite abysmal. I'm afraid I'm not a fan of 'ethnic' music which has been recorded beautifully in the studio and made to sound like it's real. That's why I thought it was on Real World. God bless Peter Gabriel and his fabulous studio – it's beautifully recorded and everything, but it doesn't crank my tractor. I love Arabic and Middle Eastern music when it's played by real people, but when I hear a bassline like that – sampled clapping – it's just such a cop-out. Pseudo-ethnic is a pretty cheap trick apart from Eno and [David] Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*; that's a beautiful record put together uniquely. I'd probably prefer to hear the music from a Bob Hope film with camels and a whole Western orchestra being Eastern... [Distracted] Good heavens, there goes Concorde.

I don't know much about film soundtracks. My favourite is *Performance* and *In The Heat Of The Night*, the Quincy Jones soundtrack album. I've sold a lot of records but didn't sell those two. But if I had this I would sell it.

AKI ONDA
"FRAGMENT DE L'AMOUR"
FROM *UN PETIT TOUR* (ALL ACCESS) 1999

Is it American?

No. You've worked with this person as well.

Oh, no. Are you sure [laughs]? Aki [Onda]? He's such a good producer, he records things excellently. I've got it but I haven't listened to it for a while. He's a really nice Japanese recording artist and photographer. Five or six years ago I did a series of concerts in Tokyo at this place called Uplink and Aki was the musical co-ordinator. The first night it was just Aki; the second night a string quartet and an Ondes Martenot player, the third I played with this guitar freak called Jimno from Okayama; the fourth night we had a saxophonist and a cutting engineer from Tokyo... and the last night Otomo [Yoshihide] and Aki as well. We played these eight nights. I'd never heard of any of the musicians and it was really exciting and refreshing.

Was any of this rehearsed?

It was improvised. I've not rehearsed with a group for over six years. He's great, Aki – he records real instruments beautifully. He's on the new album [*Swift*], he sent me some stuff. I like his combination of technology and real instruments. On *Swift* we've definitely used a lot of that, instruments very clearly recorded on top of sound collage.

***Un Petit Tour* is an 'audio diary' of Onda's trip to Franca, including photographs and recorded speech. I was interested in what you said earlier about enjoying the sound of the street leaking in [Turner's flat is on a busy road]. What made you like incorporating 'found sounds'?**

I call them 'life recordings', because it's just life: just stick a mic out of the window. It's just an idea of raw sounds. For every album [of mine] he sends me bits – he sent these tracks of cassettes going backwards, of him walking down the street in New York all recorded onto a mono tape recorder. He put it on a minidisc and it loops really crudely. Aki has got a great ear for sound.

You could play any track from a CD I made of my Australian trip and I could tell you exactly where it is and what it is. I used to be really specific about recording things but now I just put a DAT in my pocket, look at the levels and just walk. I much prefer to record a lot of rubbish and then take out tiny bits. I like the randomness of the recording and I'm lucky enough to put it to some use [laughs].

BID
"WHOOPS! WHAT A PALAVER"
FROM VARIOUS *AMEN LAST SUNSHINE DESERTS* (EL RECORDS) 1987

Monochrome Set?

Well, this is actually a solo project by [Monochrome Set vocalist] Bid.

[Sings along] I did a version of this, but I don't know what happened to it. I don't think it ever came out. Bloody difficult to sing. The trouble with Bid is that he writes these songs which are incredibly complicated to sing and the melodies are so strict. There's no way of busking your way through Bid's songs: you have to really sing. A very funny writer though, lyrically.

I always thought that as a label, Él purveyed a rather arch take on nostalgia, particularly the 60s.

That's [label founder] Mike Alway's idea. But obviously it suited The Monochrome Set better than it suited me. Él was Mike's concept of perfectly, beautifully packaged pop. Tremendous theonst. It was wonderful being on Él, I must say, quite an experience. [Looks at compilation tracklisting] My God, I seem to be covering a David Bowie song there. I only did it because I was asked to do it. Mike's a real genius. We've just done a Best Of album, *The World Of Simon Turner*, and then there's the [22 minute] cut-up version. Nice people, The Monochrome Set, but musically... I'm not a great retro man, 60s pop music isn't my strongest period.

That said, your 1999 Loveletter album for Cherry Red, *Beethoven Chopin Kitchen Fraud*, includes a number of 60s covers such as Pink Floyd's "Apples And Oranges" and a song called "Psychedelic Love".

It was Mike's concept. I didn't want to be in the studio because it would be pointless – I would just poke my nose in. The rules were I would just sing and do some guitar solos. Colin [Lloyd Tucker] and I, we turned into songwriters for Él. We made a couple of albums as Deux Filles. [Next track plays on CD]. I wrote this track

for this girl who really couldn't sing. It's terrible; "Fruit Paradise" by The Would-Be-Goods. It was a nightmare trying to record her. But Mike loved it. He's a difficult cat to pill is old Mike, sometimes. He's got very specific ideas.

WISHMOUNTAIN
"PEPPER POT"
FROM *WISHMOUNTAIN IS DEAD* (ANTIPHON) 1998

I've never heard it, but I bet this is Matmos. **Very close stylistically. This album is made using samples of 'life recordings', ie domestic appliances and utensils. It's Matt Herbert, aka Wishmountain. This is called "Pepper Pot", for obvious reasons.** That's very good. I was very surprised when I was teaching last year in Germany. Someone recently gave me a whole CD of music made using a pencil – which I was quite impressed with [laughs]. So this is a pepper pot? Excellent. I don't know this at all. It's extraordinary, people who can go to this extreme

I can get behind this. I'm looking forward to hearing the salad tosser. [Plays "Salad Tosser"] That's good, I can get right behind that salad. That's a great sound. I'm very envious. A very lovely recording. I don't think I've got the patience to make something like this. You've also got to be extremely focused. It's dance music, it's pop. If you didn't know it was a salad tosser you would say this is a great dance track. To be able to restrain yourself as well, because I'd like to go crazy over the top with four clarinets, I'd use it as a backing track and go too far with it. That's very admirable.

[Distracting, pungent smell enters the room] Can you smell that from the shop downstairs? The smell of hash... It comes through the floorboards. It reeks! [laughs]. That must be a big one...

COMMUNICATION

WORDSOUND LABEL FOUNDER SKIZ FERNANDO (LEFT) HAS PROPHESIED BOTH THE END AND THE SECOND COMING VIA HIS TWISTED HIPHOP PROJECT SPECTRE. AFTER SPENDING THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM CATALOGUING THE APOCALYPSE WITH VISIONARY, BLUNTED RELEASES FROM ARTISTS LIKE PRINCE PAUL, SENSATIONAL, MC PAUL BARMAN AND CROOKLYN DUB CONSORTIUM, HE HAS NOW TURNED HIS EXPERIENCES HUSTLING THE RECORD INDUSTRY INTO A STREETWISE MOVIE CALLED *CROOKED*. WORDS: HUA HSU. PHOTO: SUSAN NOW

In the beginning there was the word, and in the end there will be *The Second Coming* – but not Jesus Christ's. Human idols come and go, but chances are Wordsound, the tiny, resilient experimental HipHop label run by former journalist Skiz Fernando, will stick around for the blast of that last trumpet. Fernando, who also records for his label as Spectre, knows it "When I went to Egypt, I went in the Great Pyramid," he explains. "The King's Chamber is right in the centre and there are two shafts, one points toward Orion and the other points toward Sirius, the 'Dog Star', two constellations very important to the ancient Egyptians, the Mayans, people like that. When I was in there, I took the Spectre CD, *The Second Coming*. I put my hand into the shaft and I just flung it as far as it would go. At some point they're going to look in those shafts again, and when they do, they're gonna find *The Second Coming* in there."

With bookend Spectre recordings called *The End* and *The Second Coming*, and label artwork that foreshadows the coming apocalypse, Fernando may come across as just another Doomsday naysayer peddling his wares, but Wordsound has always been a little different. That's not to say paranoia and millennial tension are exactly unique in today's HipHop game. For most artists, however, it doesn't mean much more than butchering Five Per Center aesthetics or dropping lines about *The Matrix*. To Fernando and his family of artists, Wordsound's dusted world view involves a way of thinking related to the limitations of this material world. Their piecemeal philosophy draws a skinny line from the mythogenesis of human creation and the meta/physics of sound all the way through to mystical, apocalyptic prophecies and the wordpower of a Rammellzee or KRS-One. The evocative concepts behind Wordsound make it far more than a mere record label. Confident that there's something greater out there gives Fernando the strength to struggle on. Ten years after Wordsound's birth, with 40 albums and a feature film behind him already, he maintains that, for better or worse, he'll always be here, "just like the roaches".

In the end – or 20 years from now, whichever comes first – the roaches will understand why Wordsound has always lived tomorrow. Trace the label's prodigious output against HipHop's trends and sales curves, and the bad timing of many of their releases verges on the comical. More often than not, Wordsound have been just a smidgen *early*. Few people recall that it was

Skiz who put out the first widely distributed records featuring artists like Antipop Consortium and Doug Scharin's HiM, who both went on to find acclaim elsewhere; and not many more picked up Prince Paul's career-saving masterpiece, *Psychoanalysis (What Is It?)*, when it debuted on Wordsound (it was later reissued on Tommy Boy). Bill Laswell, Style Scott, Dr Israel, Sensational, Kevin Martin and DJ Vadim have all used Wordsound to scavenge the outer limits of their own work, often returning records that are as challenging and edgy as they are unmarketable.

Describing Wordsound as an enterprise that wholly reflects his own identity, it's no coincidence that Fernando was just as much of an outsider growing up in Baltimore, Maryland. He was the only kid in grammar school who dug The Clash, David Bowie and P-Funk. "No one else in my class knew any of this shit, so I was kind of lonely too!" he recalls. By high school he was frequenting legendary Washington DC punk and hardcore clubs to catch early performances by groups like Bad Brains and Government Issue. "The whole original spirit of punk rock is what I'm all about," he asserts. "Do it yourself, fuck everyone else, fuck the corporations, fuck the establishment, fuck even knowing how to do an instrument. That's basically how I started making HipHop. No one taught me how to do any of this stuff."

By the time he entered Harvard University in his late teens, Fernando was deep into reggae and HipHop, hosting a popular reggae show on the campus radio station and befriending classmates like David Mayes and Jonathan Shecter, future HipHop power brokers and founders of *The Source* magazine. After graduating, Fernando attended journalism school and began freelancing. In 1993 he took time off to write a book called *The New Beats*, a snapshot of the HipHop generation patterned after David Toop's *Rap Attack*.

For the ever-observant Fernando, the designs of two album sleeves in particular seeded the inspiration for his mighty Wordsound empire. The first he came across while helping out at Cambridge, Massachusetts-based reggae imprint Heartbeat Records during his student days at nearby Harvard. Rifling through the stock one day, he chanced upon a Jamaican compilation of dub poets called *WORO SOUN' 'AVE POWER*. Though he was still a few years away from starting up himself, he studied the sleevenotes, mentally tucking away some of its ideas for future use.

A few years later, Fernando stumbled on the second important sleeve of his life when *The Source* commissioned him to write a brief review of Material's *The Third Power*. "I'm one of those guys who reads all the fine print on the albums," he explains. "I'm interested in finding out any little thing about these guys, and I noticed it said 'Greenpoint Studios'. I told my friend, 'Greenpoint .. that's just down the road!'." Even though such a short review required little more than a few cursory listens, Fernando approached Material frontman Bill Laswell for an 'interview'. "I had no idea of the extent of Bill's output," he confesses. "I had no idea he was so prolific, I just had this one record and I was feelin' it. The reason I became a journalist was so I could meet all the people I respected and admired. So basically, out of doing a review for *The Source*, I told Bill I needed an in depth interview with him. The interview lasted, like, five hours and we were just basically talking about music. He was telling me about all this stuff he had been doing, how he had been down with Bambaataa and D.ST and all that stuff." Soon Fernando was constantly visiting his newfound neighbour who, besides blessing Skiz with a copy of The Jungle Brothers' unreleased *Crazy Wisdom Masters* album (which he would later excerpt on a Wordsound 10"), also encouraged him to start the label by offering him the initial $1000 loan it took to get it off the ground.

Subconsciously inspired by those two albums, perhaps, Wordsound have put a frightening amount of thought into the way *their* album sleeves are seen, studied and (if you're lucky) understood. Anyone familiar with their sizeable catalogue must wonder about the mysterious confluence of hieroglyphs, medieval crests, religious and spiritual icons and pictograms adorning their sleeves.

In 1998, Fernando started the Black Hoods series of vinyl 10" HipHop and dub singles. The records are uniformly housed in ziptop plastic sleeves – cleverly called 'dime bags', American slang for a thumbnail-sized plastic bag of marijuana – adorned with a mysterious, silhouetted face in the centre of a spade. "In the early 1970s there were a lot of gangs in New York and the Black Spades was Bambaataa's gang," explains Fernando, "so that's where the Black Hoods thing came from. It's a black spade but the guy in it is really an angel, that's the angel Gabriel blowing the trumpet – the base of the spade – to announce Armageddon.

"We were just trying to represent stuff that we were interested in and also be original and different," he continues. "The whole thing of the concept album was kind of big in the 1970s, but it kind of fell out. I think a lot of our albums are kind of like concept albums, it's more than just a collection of music, there's always something a little more to it. It's on the listener to figure out what that is. Also, I read a lot of occult stuff and a lot of the people I'm involved with are interested in that stuff too, so we wanted to represent the half that's never been told."

If you browse through Wordsound's cryptic Website, you'll get a good sense of what Fernando means by untold truth. It includes a reading list that darts from Carl Jung and Philip K Dick to Robert Anton Wilson's *The Illuminatus Trilogy* and Hazrat Inayat Khan. There are references to 12th planets and castles made of sound, as well as a short essay on "The Alphanumerics Of The Hebrew Alphabet" and a legend of signs used by hobos. For Fernando, then, taking language and literacy 'back to the Old School' doesn't mean KRS or Rakim; he's talking about Adam and God, transcendence and universal vibration.

"I consider myself a spiritual person but I don't really follow any religions, I follow all of them," he testifies. "I take little bits from all of them to make my own kind of religion, and sound has a lot to do with that. I was reading this book called *The World Is Sound*. It was written by this Sufi guy, Hazrat Inayat Khan. It's incredible how he breaks down everything. It's like, even matter is a vibration, it's atomic particles just moving around but very slowly, and this is where physics intersects with metaphysics. All these kinds of spiritual concepts are now colliding with science.

"I'm always interested in the realm beyond the senses, you know," he continues, "because we're kind of prisoners to our senses – what we can touch, taste, feel, hear and see. But to me, there's a whole realm beyond that. When you can tap into that realm, that's when you're really living. Some people get there by drugs but I think it's possible to get there through other ways. For me, music has always been one gateway to that realm. Trance music now has a different connotation, but stuff like ancient musics... when you listen to that stuff, you can really be taken away to other places. To me, music has always had that effect. Music is much, much more than entertainment. Making music is almost like therapy to me, because a lot of my stuff is real dark and violent and ill, and I think if I didn't have this outlet to express myself, I'd probably be a serial killer or something." After the most pregnant of pauses, Fernando lets out a slight chuckle. "But I'm a pretty good-natured, rational person, normally."

The Wordsound aesthetic closely follows his ever-changing moods. Underpinned by HipHop's midnight ramblings and the nurturing, wandering warmth of heavy dub, Wordsound releases are soundclash to the death, album-length trainwrecks of thought lost in time. "You can say the music is dark or freaky or offbeat," Fernando offers, "but that's me. I'm not trying to represent anything other than me. All the artists who are on Wordsound are like a part of me, kind of. The reason I was attracted to them and their music was because I saw something of myself in that."

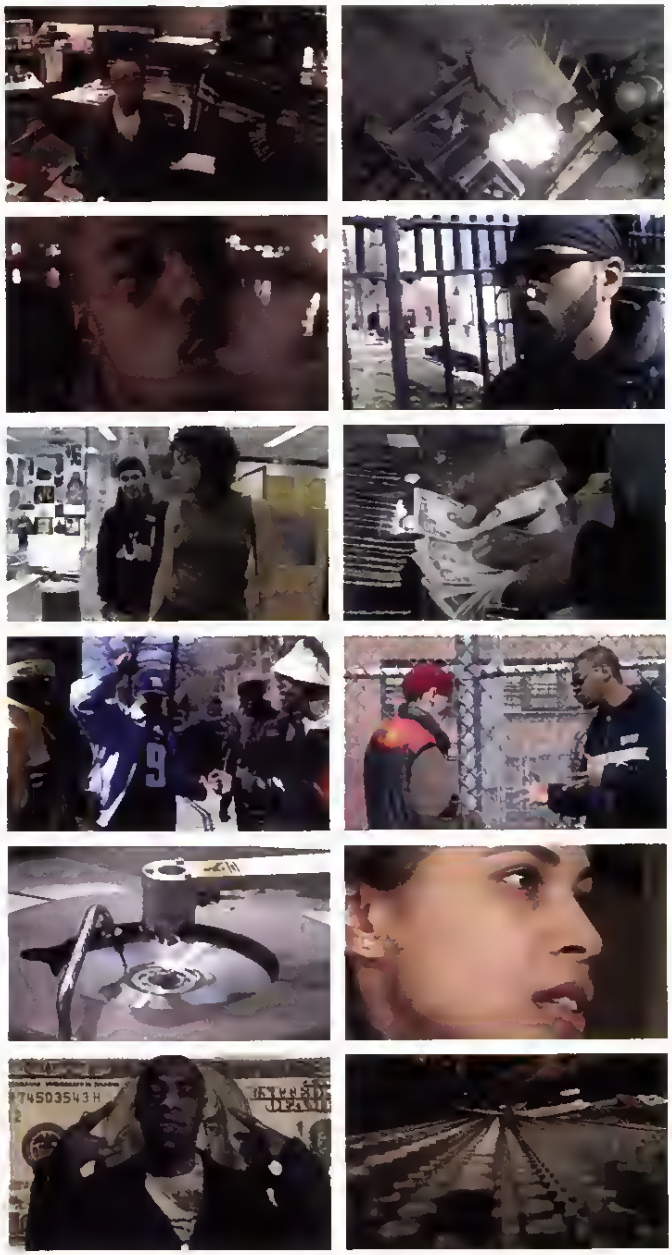
Ten years and 40 releases later, the Wordsound back catalogue might have unwittingly predicted some of the wild styles that are heralded today as progressive. Early releases like Crooklyn Dub Consortium, Dr Israel and Fernando's multiple aliases (Spectre, Slotek, Roots Control) arguably offered some of the fiercest collisions of dancehall and dance club of their time. Wordsound also released the official debuts of Antipop Consortium and Doug Scharin's HiM project, as well as early cuts from Rob Swift (X-ecutioners) and The Bug, a concept project pairing Techno Animal's Kevin Martin with DJ Vadim. And then there were the Pauls.

"Prince Paul was one of those guys I'd kept in contact with from *The New Beats*," Skiz remembers. "I told him I was starting a label and that he should do something. 'Anything you want. Give me anything you want on a DAT and I'll put it out.' I think that really got him open, just being on a major label so long he was always told what to do." Unfettered by the industry's remote control, Paul committed beef to wax and acted out all the pent-up aggressions that had accumulated since his days in Stetsasonic and De La Soul. The resulting album – 1996's *Psychoanalysis (What Is It?)* – was as twisted as it was just plain sick. Picked up the next year by Tommy Boy, it signalled Paul's return to the rap throne. "That was at a time when the industry had forgotten about Paul and he had kind of been dissed by a lot of people," Fernando says, "It was great that he got his regeneration through Wordsound, kind of like how Kool Keith came back through Dr Octagon."

A few years later, Paul brought Fernando another Paul, this one an awkward, Brown University educated wise-ass MC with the surname Barman. With Prince Paul behind the boards, MC Paul Barman's *It's Very Stimulating* EP became one of 1999's cult hits. 'Aww man, he came strictly through Prince Paul, I had nothing to do with him," Fernando laughs. "Paul had been telling me about the guy for a while. I remember sitting with [Prince Paul] in my living room while we were listening to that for the first time, I was just smiling and nodding my head, thinking, 'What are we gonna do with *this*?' But he knew what he was doing – you got to hand it to the man!"

Currently, the label's biggest 'star' is the terminally gruff rapper/producer Sensational. With a voice that bottoms out at a dull, nearly inaudible rumble and beats that jettison the question of fidelity altogether, Sensational outweirds all comers by a good margin. "He couldn't make a slick track if he tried," kids Fernando. "If you put him in the Hit Factor, he would come out with the most dusted shit you've ever heard, and I like that about Sensational." After two albums for Wordsound, Sensational released 2000's *Heavyweighter* on Matador. Mainstream American magazines picked up on a line in Sensational's press blog about him being homeless, but few people were laughing when it turned out to be true.

Wordsound's most recent project is *Crooked*, a film Skiz made based loosely on the lives of himself and Sensational. Much like Prince Paul's *A Prince Among Thieves* HipHopera, *Crooked* follows a hopeful young rapper's descent into New York's mean streets. Basically playing himself, Sensational turns from an aspiring but broke young freshman into a conspiring, cynical hustler dabbling in all sorts of dirty deeds, ever



STREET HASSLE: SCENES FROM SKIZ FERNANDO'S WORDSOUND MOVIE *CROOKED*, FEATURING SENSATIONAL (BOTTOM LEFT)

hopeful that his big break in the rap game is just around the corner. The ultimate Wordsound movie, label artists and supporters like Mr Dead, Scotty Hard, Antipop Consortium, DJ Monk One and graffiti legend Futura all show up for bit parts; but true rap aficionados will note a brief appearance from the portly Prince Be of ultimate peace brothers PM Dawn. "I had him as kind of a violent guy," laughs Fernando, "so real heads will understand that reference!"

Though he had no experience in film, Fernando wrote the script during a two month trip to his native Sri Lanka in 1999. Armed with two new digital video cameras, he enlisted all the help he could get, shooting six days a week through April 2000 and editing for the rest of the year whenever he had spare time. Hearing Skiz talk with unfaltering enthusiasm about his beloved "student film" reminds you how committed he has been to keeping his edgy little operation solvent. Wordsound was never intended to be merely a contraband imprint, rather, its weird, honest output has been an expression of the faith Skiz puts in his friends and conspirators, as evidenced by the hands-off policy he exercises on submitted material. Occasionally that faith is repaid and the risks are recouped, but either way it's a humane and inspiring way of doing business.

In particular, his commitment to his friend Sensational is touching, and not just because everyone else in the HipHop community has all but forgotten about the troubled rapper. "He lives HipHop," Skiz enthuses. "His whole life is just making beats, chasing women and smoking herb. He's fallen on hard times right now – we all have, really .. this is the first time in ten years I've had to get a day job. I'm bagging groceries for $6.75 an hour just so I can survive, and I have absolutely no promotional budget. The thing is, everything that's happened in the movie has happened in real life." Every little scene in the film contains a kernel of truth, he explains, from NYC HipHop megastore Fat Beats refusing to stock Wordsound because it "wasn't HipHop" to the crooked A&R politics of Reaction Records, the film's fictionalised major label. However, the eerriest crossover of fact and fiction involves Sensational. Like his character in the film, he recently fell upon some bad times that resulted in him selling all of his recording equipment and moving back into the projects. Unconsciously, he fell in with the same types of hustlers as his character. "He ended up getting involved with some real bad people that he shouldn't have gotten involved with," Fernando reports, his voice arching downward. "Sensational's not a thug, man, he's a real cool, decent, nice guy. He's not the type of dude to mess with guns and shit like that, but living in the projects, he got drawn up into that whole thing.

"Now that I'm back in the workforce, as far as the nine to five thing, I'm sort of re-examining shit. Like, damn, did I make a mistake all these years? Did I waste my time doing all this stuff, all these years? But then I could never live doing anything else but what I do, which is to create stuff. Words or sounds or whatever."

Today, Fernando is still philosophical about Wordsound's fate. In an industry where timing is just as important as vision, he believes that Wordsound is misunderstood, not just because they have been ahead of their time. "I always considered myself a futuristic kind of thinker, so I'm trying to take it somewhere in my own little way," he concludes. "It might not be where everyone else is going, but sometimes it's good to check out another dark little corner of the world. Maybe 20 years from now we'll be considered the punk rockers of HipHop or something like that. Which would be just fine, because I'd rather be that than Jay-Z." ☐ *The* Crooked *DVD + CD soundtrack double pack is out now. Website: www.wordsound.com*

VINYL

REDEMPTION

EQUIPPED WITH ANTIQUE DANSETTE PLAYERS AND SCRATCHED RECORDS FROM JUNKSHOPS AND CAR BOOT SALES, TURNTABLE ARTIST PHILIP JECK JOURNEYS INTO A PAST STEEPED IN MELANCHOLY, RECOVERING DREAMS AND DESIRES BURIED DEEP IN VINYL'S DIRT-ENCRUSTED GROOVES. WORDS: CLIVE BELL. PHOTOS: MATTIAS EK

***Stoke* is the title** of Philip Jeck's new album, and appropiately enough the cover glows like a furnace. Actually it's a shot of a living room lit through a fiery red curtain, and the title affectionately references the Potteries town in the English Midlands where Jeck once lived. "Stoke is an out of the way place that not many people go to," he remembers, "and funnily enough not many people leave. It has one of the most solid populations – there's one industry there, so if they work in the Potteries, where else can they go? It's a nether world in some ways. I'm not putting it down, a lot of it has a really nice atmosphere."

Jeck makes his music with turntables. "The Technics 1200 is the *only* turntable," opined Moby last month in *Wired* magazine. At a Philip Jeck show, however, you would be hard pressed to catch a glint of gleaming steel and diecast aluminium of the paired Technics 1200s that have become the standard set-up of almost every other DJ. Jeck rescues all those old record players languishing in attics and car boot sales, wipes off the cobwebs and filth, and gives them a new career as members of his small orchestra, their names lovingly credited on the sleeve. "*Stoke* was made using Bush, Fidelity and Philips record players, Casio keyboard and Alba portable CD player." The Casio he uses is the tiny, primitive sampling keyboard, the SK1. "It always sounds great," he chuckles, "I'm very rarely disappointed by what it does." A guitarist's delay pedal and a Dictaphone complete his equipment list. But the way Jeck handles his raw material also affects the musical outcome. Like a Detroit DJ's worst nightmare, he's not averse to leaving his records lying in dirt, or applying the turntable brakes where others might speed into the breaks. Through these parsimonious means, without fireworks or showy technique, Jeck realigns the emotional content of his vinyl sources to a two-way time track that makes familiar noises from the past resonate against the real-time turntable mechanics of the needle tracking the groove. Slowly accumulating in emotional impact, his music conveys unexpected messages about memory and decay.

Within turntablism, Jeck is an independent figure who prefers to stay on the margins. Maybe living in Stoke was one expression of this. "I do like a distance between myself and all the other people and things," he confesses. "I like playing first on a bill, so I can make my statement without anything having gone before, coming from cold to warm."

Jeck's background and CV are as irregular as his DJ techniques. Having trained in visual art, he spent much time in the worlds of performance art and contemporary dance before settling down to make music; yet, you feel, if he hadn't succumbed to the charms of the Dansette, he could have lighted on some other, probably non-musical, form of artistic activity. In 1993 he and visual artist Lol Sargent produced *Vinyl Requiem*, a prizewinning epic show for 180 record players, nine slide projectors and two movie projectors. Since then Jeck has refined his music via three albums for the Touch label: *Loopholes* (1995), *Surf* (1999) and now *Stoke*. Meanwhile, on *Vinyl Coda* (Intermedium, 2000), a double CD compiling three live broadcasts for German radio, he relished the chance to develop musical strands over a 60 minute piece, "Vinyl Coda II", which picked up a prestigious radio prize (Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht number among its previous winners).

Just as a battered Dansette does not lend itself to desk-hopping scratch gymnastics, so Jeck's music is more of a hypnotic reverie, a search for beauty through the strangely emotional landscape of sound he gradually evolves. Borrowing a trick he observed in Christian Marclay's performances, he sticks tape on the records to create locked grooves. The resulting loops are then stacked like planes waiting to land, gradually running out of sync with each other, with Jeck adding extra layers from sampled extracts subject to

delay pedal treatment. Meanwhile his Dictaphone contains recordings taken from the same records, which it plays back in its own cheerfully degraded lo-fi. The whole is overlaid with an aural patina of surface noise from ancient records. Sometimes his music recalls a journey aboard an old train, a swaying repetition of mechanical imperfection. Elsewhere it has a dream-sozzled kind of humour, like when the Pope begins to chant in Latin over a lazy bar band of Hawaiian marimbas. On the new album, "Open" has a clanking industrial beat, while "Close" sets up an Asian encounter between Indian sitar and Japanese shamisen; and the standout track "Pax" creates an eerie magic out of a few slowed down snatches of Country gospel.

I meet Jeck at his home in Liverpool, just after his return from several concerts and radio broadcasts at the Moers festival in Germany. Does he feel his music has changed since *Surf* appeared seven years ago? Is he getting more out of less? "I think that's really true," he agrees. "Performing live, in an hour's concert I might have gone through 40 records. Now I might use between five and ten. It's really changed. I get more out of one or two things, and there's more space. I think that's purely through experience, and having the self belief that you can do very little. A very good example of that was when I played in Osaka, and I had real problems with the equipment [See On Location, *The Wire* 202]. One of the record players packed up, the minidisc packed up, and the Casio, all amazingly within ten minutes of starting the concert. My first thought was this is just too much, I'm going to have to stop. But some Protestant work ethic in me says, 'No, you're paid to do this, so you have got to do it, no matter how painful'. And I'm so glad that I did. The audience obviously picked up that I was really, you know, on one there. I was left with one record player and a Dictaphone. I thought, now it's gone this small, let's go even smaller. So I turned the mixer off, and I just had the sound from the little speaker of the Dansette and from the Dictaphone. No sound system. It was really quiet – that was a noisy club, but you could have heard a pin drop. The tension was fantastic. I could see people thinking, what's he doing? I played a long passage like that, with just a music box recorded on the Dictaphone, and one record, and managed to find variations on that. That was a moment of realising you can do very little and still be interesting. I wouldn't like it to happen too often, I don't think the heart would take it. But some of those principles you can apply – I often ask myself, 'Am I playing too much?' Take a few things away, strip it down."

Comparing *Surf* to *Stoke*, another detectable change is a shift away from guitar records towards vocal sounds. As Jeck explains, this is the result of natural wastage. "I have phases where I constantly reuse certain records," he continues, "till they get just too knackered to play and they go in the Really Damaged box, and new ones shift in. But then some of those tracks on *Stoke* are almost like requests. When I went to Japan in 2000, Talvin Singh was top of the bill. And the British Council said, would I be interested in using some Indian music? So I looked in my box to see if I had any old, scratched sitar records, and lo and behold I had. That's why there's sitar playing on the album, it's like request time."

Jeck has no objection to this kind of prodding. In fact it recalls the way he started out in the 1980s, playing music for dance companies. "Anatomy" on the *Loopholes* album resulted from a commission from the Anatomy dance company, who wanted a piece specifically based on Mozart's opera *Cosi Fan Tutte*. Jeck created the whole thing from one song's opening two bars.

"I tried to play live with dance companies wherever possible," he says. "If you make them a soundtrack, then they go on tour and change everything. When you see it again, you want to change the sound." He honed his skills performing live with improvising dancer Laurie Booth, a friend from the X6 dance collective. Roughly speaking, X6 was the dancer's equivalent of the London Musicians Collective, and the two organisations produced much crossover work. X6 was housed in the beautiful tea blending and cinnamon warehouses of Butlers Wharf, overlooking the Thames – now a million dollar home to Terence Conran's design and restaurant projects.

"Working with Laurie Booth was a really important time for me and what I do," Jeck admits. "One day, in maybe 1984, Laurie said, 'I have this gig at the [Brighton] Zap Club next week, do you want to come and do something?' Looking back, I'm not sure he even knew I had just started working with record players. He knew me from my performance work. We didn't have a rehearsal, we just went down to Brighton and did it. Our next gig was quite a contrast: We went to the Munich Opera House, or an attachment to it, old King Ludwig's stables. He must have had bloody big horses, because it's about 50 metres high. We were part of a British night, through the Dance Umbrella. Then Laurie got an agent in Holland, and we just had four or five years of an unbelievable amount of work, in America and everywhere. And I developed what I do on the road. We very rarely did any rehearsals together. You learn very quickly when you're on stage in front of people."

In the early 1980s vinyl still reigned supreme, and the compact disc was not yet a digital twinkle in the rheumy eye of the music biz. At this time the young Philip Jeck was one of a small band of unpredictable artists – Max Eastley and Paul Burwell among them – performing in the cracks between disciplines, slithering easily between music, dance, poetry and site-specific performance art. "Visual art was my training at Dartington College," recalls Jeck. "When I was there, one day a week during your first year you worked in another department. I did theatre workshops with The People Show [see *The Wire* 220], they were a big influence. So my time at Dartington shifted my view of what I would do with art, from making objects that hang on walls, to the ephemeral thing, the thing that you do as a performance or show and then it's gone. I thought The People Show were fantastic. They created great atmospheres with chopped up memories. They were like mixing: mixing genres and creating something else out of it. That struck a real chord with me."

A kindred spirit at Dartington was Doug Gill, who lived in a vast loft in Butlers Wharf above the X6 dance space. After college Jeck retreated to his parents' home outside Cambridge and found a job as a roofer. Gill persuaded him down off his ladder and to London, to take part in the goings on at venues like the Oval House theatre and the old LMC building in Chalk Farm.

"We used to create a space and then activate it," he says. "We liked to do performances in old buildings. We did one at the LMC where we took the audience outside, almost onto the railway to get themselves killed. We discovered there was a tunnel underneath the railway, with grilles over it every now and then. So we had the audience standing near the grille, we made some puppets, and we had a little puppet show coming out of the drains. Then of course it started pouring with rain, and we were underneath a dirty waterfall. We had a lot of torches to light the show, which the rain put out... It was good! But I would be a bit more professional about it now, I think."

Though he never played a musical instrument, listening to music was one of Jeck's chief pleasures as a child. He fondly recalls the sound of his uncle's 78rpm records, Elvis Presley and Little Richard, filtered through the warm, beefy speakers of the family radiogram. "Probably fairly low fidelity," he speculates, "but that's all your experience is, so you don't know that. You think that's what all music sounds like. Obviously I never saw Elvis live, not even on TV." In the 1960s, from the age of 12 or 13, he started collecting records. By 1979, HipHop's Year Zero, he was out of college and listening to the first American mixing DJs: Grandmaster Flash, Larry Levan and Walter Gibbons. The cellist Arthur Russell is a particular hero. A formally trained composer who accompanied Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, Russell moved to New York and founded the proto-HipHop label Sleeping Bag.

"Arthur Russell is fantastic," Jeck enthuses, "he's playing mainstream disco with a cello. And singing a bit like John Martyn. There's one track of his, "School Bell/Treehouse", with Pete Zummo the trombonist. People from the avant garde making disco records, that was a great crossover." This track, plus Russell's other 12" classic, "Let's Go Swimming", were both mixed by club DJ Walter Gibbons. In 1999 Jeck expressed his admiration in the form of a tribute to Russell and Gibbons, who both died in the 90s from AIDS-related illnesses, included on a Liverpool based compilation, *Trace*, on Audio Research.

Inspired by hearing "The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel", and by reading about Jamaican DJ Kool Herc's innovative use of two copies of the same record, Jeck went out and purchased a second turntable and a cheap disco mixer, and tried to copy what he was hearing – "abysmally", he judges now. When I point out the gulf between HipHop's rapid cutting and Jeck's mesmeric aural snowdrifts, he replies: "It became more to do with DJs like Walter Gibbons or Larry Levan, who mixed records into really long trips. Two compilation albums from New York's Kiss FM radio were very influential on me." He tugs *Kiss FM Mastermixes Vols 1 & 2* from a shelf of 1980s vinyl gold dust. "I used to play these to death. They extended funk disco tracks into real epics – it's common now, of course, but to me then, that was new. I particularly liked D Train, they had long, dreamy tracks. I still play their "Keep On" and "Music", in fact I just played them on a local radio show in Moers."

After cutting his mixing teeth on a pair of modern turntables, Jeck looked around for a machine that could play old 78rpm shellac. Eventually he chanced on one in a South London junk shop. Not only did its speeds range from a dizzy 78 to an opiated 16rpm, it also had an orifice labelled Tape Out, permitting him to connect it to his mixer. More than a bargain, he had an epiphany as soon as he turned it on.

"When I heard the sound coming out the speaker, it was just like that!" he remembers. "I almost had the whole picture of *Vinyl Requiem* within 30 seconds. I thought, 'If I get a few more of these, maybe I could have a little band of them, a quartet...' Then during the late 80s the idea grew that I could do something really big with these record players, something acoustic. I spent four years collecting them, going to car boot sales in Stoke every Sunday. It was like going fishing, sometimes you get three or four, other times you come back with nothing. So the first one, although I bought it to play at 78, it also had 16, which obviously was a failed medium. It must have been for speech because the fidelity was so low. You could probably get the works of Shakespeare on one side. But listening to 45s at 16, it is unbelievable what happens."

So nostalgia must be involved here. The sound of the speaker recalling the glowing lo-fi of the childhood radiogram? "At one point I used to deny it was anything to do with nostalgia," he avers, "but it is, it's got to be. And it's not only the sound, it's the smell of them. They smell old, because they've been in cellars or attics. They have the dust, the detritus of people's homes. The dirt on them is history. One had stickers of The Monkees. You can tell its history by looking at it."

Call it nostalgia, history or memory, Jeck's music is redolent of it. There's the half-remembered echo of some musical passage on a record, distorted to a

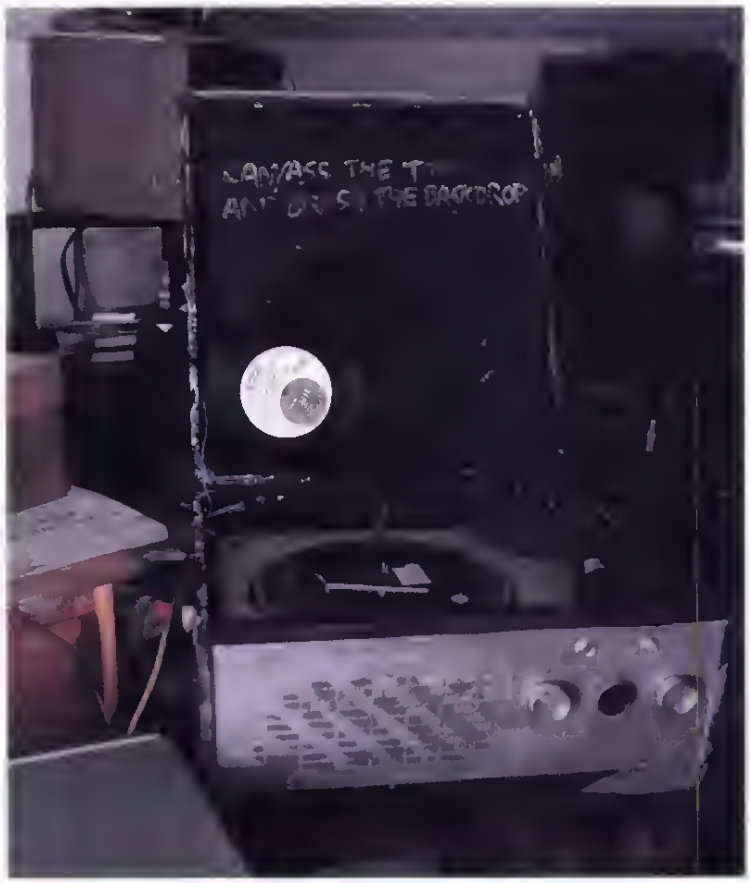
greater or lesser extent by his manipulations. Then there's the history of the records themselves as objects, and the players too, all too audible in the scree of surface noise and irregular mechanical behaviour. The condition of the vinyl's surface is an integral musical element. And then there's the broader sense of decay, melancholy and time passing in the resultant music. The lacrimae rerum, the tears inherent in things. While not overtly tragic or gloomy, the way Jeck's work expresses sadness could be a musical equivalent of what certain writers do with words – German novelist WG Sebald, who lived for years in East Anglia before he died in a car accident just recently; or John McGahern, with his tales of the vanishing life around a lake in rural Ireland. Their strangely atmospheric prose, inclined to the long drift rather than the snappy paragraph, makes them Jeck's spiritual confreres. Sebald collects stray photographs and places them in his text, blurring the boundaries between fiction and history. The hypnotic quality of his writing spins these fragments into an affecting mood in which the past seems to illuminate the present. Rather like Jeck, he distils an intensely personal world with wider resonance. They both leave us with the feeling that our inevitable failure to really grasp the past breeds melancholy.

The very title of Jeck's magnum opus, *Vinyl Requiem*, expresses mourning. The immediate meaning dealt with the frontline bulletin from the battle of the mediums, that historic moment when vinyl conceded defeat to CD and digital formats. Perhaps the doom-mongers were being a touch premature – apparently, vinyl has now revived sufficiently to outsell cassettes, prompting Jeck to wonder aloud about a "Vinyl Reincarnation". But the requiem has a broader meaning, as the vinyl record becomes a metaphor for the passage of time and decay in general. Far from being a nostalgic withdrawal from present reality, he feels his music is a reflection, not overt but sincerely felt, of what lies around him. And, more often than not, what lies around you in a British city is rubbish.

"Things make me sad," Jeck expands. "I feel sad about the way people are in the street. Liverpool is one of the dirtiest places I've ever lived. I can understand children chucking paper and cans in the street, but the majority of adults do it as well. I sound like a grumpy old git, but it really winds me up, makes me despair. OK, litter is a small thing, but it's part of a malaise of not being connected to where you are. People don't vote in elections any more, because there seems to be a disconnection between 'me' and the world. I'm in my bubble and I go and do this and that .. So I sometimes get very sad about how things are, and I hope that is reflected in what I do.

"I never set out to make a melancholy piece," he continues. "Maybe I should get some Wombles records and make a piece about litter – in fact I'm never sure of what the atmosphere is going to be like until I start working. I try to let it come out of the records I'm using, and somehow connect with that, and just push it or expand it. And I'm not quite sure how I do that. Sometimes I open up a little sound – it opens and opens, and suddenly these two things from these two records expand to become a really big thing in my head. And I'm in this landscape of sounds. That's when a concert is going well, when I feel I've actually stepped into the sound and I'm not outside manipulating it. I'm finding my way around inside the forest.

"The French film maker Robert Bresson," concludes Jeck, "wrote a very nice book called *Notes On The Cinematographer*, though it relates to all the art forms. There was one thing he said: 'Don't force poetry. It will come up through the cracks.' He was talking about when you're filming – just do the filming. And let the magic come out. That for me is absolutely spot on. The best things happen when you just let them come, you don't force them. Sometimes you force it, and it goes away." ☐ Stoke *is out now on Touch*



ABOVE: PHILIP JECK AT HOME IN LIVERPOOL, MAY 2002
TOP: ONE OF JECK'S CUSTOMISED DANSETTES

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER

THE ELECTRICITY COMES ON ONLY AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT IN THE COLD, DARK UNIVERSE OF TOKYO'S **KEIJI HAINO**. EITHER ALONE, WITH HIS GROUPS FUSHITSUSHA AND AIHIYO, OR IN HIS CURRENT FLIRTATION WITH DJ CULTURE, HE HAS SPENT 30 YEARS REALISING HIS SOLITARY VISION OF UNDERGROUND ROCK AS RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL CONTROL AND WESTERN CULTURAL IMPERIALISM. WORDS: ALAN CUMMINGS. PHOTOS: JUNKO YAMADA

"The universe is weeping," begins Keiji Haino cryptically, "but there's one fragment of it that wants desperately to block out those screams of pain. That fragment is me. I started to ask myself where these sounds came from, why I could hear them. That's why I started to play music. Did the universe come into existence when someone started questioning its existence? Do we remember if we were already born? These questions are very important to me. Did the image exist first, or does the image give rise to the actual thing? But if you're not on the side to affirm that you have been born, there is no meaning to performing. It's difficult to find that balance within yourself."

Like some collapsed dark star, Keiji Haino has been exerting an uncanny gravitational pull over the Japanese underground for more than 30 years. Billowing out of a dwarf amplifier stack in loud, dense folds of resonance and reverb, his musical universe keeps on expanding, its regular and unchanging atomic pulse holding true, while empires fall, dynasties die out and trends come and go all around him. Drug-free, teetotal and vegetarian, Haino is clad from head to toe in black, accessorised with ever-present dark glasses, long cape and silver-headed cane. The look has hardly changed since he first stepped out in the early 1970s, though today his waist-length hair is now shot through with white. While other musicians waffle on about development and growth, Haino at 50 declares he is now and forever what he has always been.

To Haino, change might be a sign of bad faith, but musically he is constantly switching channels, spreading himself across an enormous number of solo projects, groups and collaborations. He is variously a cataclysmic noise guitarist, an achingly delicate soprano vocalist, a manic hurdy-gurdy man, an austere dancer-percussionist and, of late, a one man orchestra wielding a sampler and an armoury of ethnic instruments. Presently he splits his time between his groups Fushitsusha and Aihiyo, plus a new unit he shares with Ruins, called Knead, the recently reconvened Vajra trio with veteran roots vocalist Kan Mikami and drummer Toshi Ishizuka, not to mention his myriad solo manifestations and ad hoc improv encounters. His discography is correspondingly vast, already topping 100 records. Given that he didn't release much at all before the first Fushitsusha record on Tokyo's PSF in 1989, the figure is all the more astonishing. For all its variety, his daunting corpus is always immediately identifiable as Haino, even if its defining element remains characteristically elusive. Tremulous, sad, spectral .. the Haino factor could be the haunting sense of loss infusing the mosaic detail of his guitar improvisations, or resonating from the bottomless pits of his rock group Fushitsusha. "Compared to other artists, musicians are immensely lonely," Haino declares. "With painting or words you can always confirm what you've done, but music returns to nothing. It's like seeing a part of yourself echoing away into nothingness. People who say that you can write music down just don't get it. So, all musicians are lonely, and that means they want friends. Not just one, dozens and dozens. That's why we perform, the psychology of musicians is that simple... I want to make friends with the universe."

From the outside, the formidable universe of Keiji Haino looks like a dark, cold place, alien and hostile. In close up, however, its blackness reveals its many shades, and you can begin to trace the streams of loneliness feeding into his well of existential sadness back to their various sources. When he landed in the Scottish town of Stirling recently to participate in the Le Weekend festival, he chose to perform as Aihiyo, his 'covers' group, believing it to be the most accessible port of entry to his art. Once drawn in by their familiarity with the originals, goes the logic, the way he absorbs them into Aihiyo and transforms them

acts as a vivid demonstration of his musical philosophy. Originally formed as a basic rock trio in 1998, but at the moment whittled down to Haino solo, Aihiyo's Stirling set included "Purple Haze", The Rolling Stones' "As Tears Go By" and "Satisfaction". You'd be forgiven for not recognising them. "What I do in Aihiyo is a little different from the usual idea of the cover version," Haino explains. "I prefer to think of it in terms of the methodology of dissimilation, as the first step in a scientific experiment .. You could look upon this methodology as a concrete reflection of alchemy through music." In contrast to Fushitsusha, where he says that the lyrics "descend upon" him, Aihiyo demands at least some faithfulness to the originals. Frequently, in fact, they are the only signifiers that remain from the original, after riffs, rhythm and structure have all been demolished. The intention is flagged by the cryptic message inscribed on the group's first release. 'Words, desire you not to take on meaning. Instead, become vibrations and then be sung.' Which is to say, Haino's Japanese texts aren't so much literal translations as speculative psychological profiles of the originals. A standout was his cover of Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean", which recast Jefferson's quivering blues as a terrifying spiritual, sung by Haino as a weirdly disembodied howl over chain-rattling loops of metallic guitars. In effect, it was little less than a resurrection of the blues as actual suffering.

Blind Lemon Jefferson's blues song offers one useful coordinate for Haino's universe. Another is the aesthetic of duende elaborated by the Spanish poet Frederico Garcia Lorca. A dark, animating force of the soul, Lorca described duende in terms that resonated deeply with Haino. "There is no map, no formula to seek the duende. We only know that it burns the blood like glass, that it drains you, that it rejects all the sweet geometry that you have learned." Haino himself quotes from one of Lorca's anecdotes about a fabled gypsy flamenco singer of the 1920s called Manuel Torre, who would weave his mystery at late night parties where he would sit and drink, listening intently to the other singers, absorbing their breathing patterns but refusing to sing himself. Finally, after everyone else had collapsed into sleep, he would begin to sing. 'He would say that something had descended upon him and compelled him to sing,' Haino explains. "I believe that the music I play comes from the same place. So this 'mystery' exists everywhere, within everyone. It is just that people are very rarely aware of it. My one dream is that people might hear my music and become aware of this 'mystery' within themselves."

Communicating and investigating this "mystery of music", as Haino terms it, is central to his work. After Jefferson's blues and Lorca's idea of duende, a very Japanese idea enriches his musical interrogations of his core mystery: the concept of 'ma'. Holding very specific Japanese aesthetic connotations, it refers to a unique kind of space, one that is not empty but rather filled with itself. As Japanese expert Donald Richie has commented, 'ma' possesses "its own weight, its own specific gravity: its own presence".

The young Haino came to understand the concept of 'ma' during a flurry of experimental encounters with key Japanese artists in the mid-70s, shortly after he had left the group Lost Aaraaf. Back then he was still primarily known as a singer. At a loose end, he supplied vocals for multi-instrumentalist teen genius Magical Power Mako's debut album, and hooked up with composer Toru Takemitsu for a film soundtrack commission. There were also early experiments with electronics (documented on the solo CD *Amanogawa* and in the *Soul's True Love* boxset, Haino's four CD compilation of 70s recordings, otherwise the most under-documented part of his career, collaborations with butoh dancers like Min Tanaka, and with wild free saxophonist Kaoru Abe. "I had become totally obsessed with rhythm and with the problem of 'ma'," Haino remembers, "and I was gradually getting sucked into a world without sound." In Japanese screens and scroll paintings, 'ma' is the blank spaces that support and balance the painted portions. Haino's discovery of his own sense of 'ma' underpins all of his music. 'Ma' is the haunted spaces between the notes, the electric silences, most clearly audible in his solo percussion work where each individual sound is given room to breathe, echo, interact with the body, and finally decay. Fortuitously, Haino's discovery of 'ma' coincided with his introduction to Country blues, specifically Blind Lemon Jefferson, at a friend's place in Kyoto. "The record was old and horribly scratchy, and I didn't get it at first," he recalls. But then he had an epiphany: under all that noise was a common approach to sound and space. Haino interprets it in terms of acceleration, explaining, "When you really want to communicate something, talking turns to screaming, and if that desire becomes even stronger then you end up praying. That's what I mean by acceleration. But if you're not careful, prayer can flip over into cursing."

Haino spent the next three years listening deeply to Jefferson, John Lee Hooker, Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker, struggling to understand their rhythms, and more importantly how 'ma' tangled through and supported them. He came to some surprising conclusions. In his reading, avant garde composers and free jazz players had misunderstood 'ma' altogether. "They use 'ma' just as an effect," he claims, "and as a result their music becomes disconnected, discontinuous." The likes of Syd Barrett, he says, had an instinctive, truer understanding of acceleration and rhythmic space. Haino applied his discoveries to the guitar, finally returning to serious live performance in 1978 after a three year absence. His experiments bore full fruit with Fushitsusha, his first group as leader, formed in late 1978 as a duo with himself on guitar and vocals and Tamio Shiraishi on synth.

From the outset, Fushitsusha was about Haino's first love: rock music. Rock, for him, is not a form, but an ideal. "I think that rock probably means far more to me than it does to other people," he purrs. "I'm probably trying to do the things that Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, Marc Bolan couldn't do. The reason why rock music today is worthless is because it's only trying to do the possible. But I believe that rock means the impossible, the incomplete."

Haino values rock as a primal gesture, for its free structural dynamic, its basic tendency to resist the easy domination of chord progressions, its willingness to admit noise and its anti-establishment stance. "I just love the word 'rock'," he once told Japanese music magazine *Doll*. But one thing you need to be aware of is that in rock there is always someone who controls .. rock played by whites is controlled by blacks. What I want most to get across to people is that we should never create positions of control. I don't mean that we should destroy them, but I want people to become really aware that they aren't free. I grew up on rock, but I want to take it to another world."

When Haino sees rock in black and white terms, he's talking more about the suffocating reverence rockers once had for blues and R&B, rather than who holds the economic power in the music industry. For example, Fushitsusha have always striven to escape the hold of set forms and historical models: the 12 tone, eight beat and 12 bar structures that have straitjacketed music's energy. His notion of rock starts from destruction. "Ever since I was little I always had this desire to destroy things that already existed," he reveals. "Nothing pre-existing ever managed to touch me... and it's the same when I'm creating songs. I like to destroy the relationship between arrangement and improvisation. Anything I can break, I will... I have no desire to protect my own

songs, so I can't forgive others who are narcissistic about what they've written."

By introducing his personal 'ma' into its rhythms and continually distorting the music's pulse, Haino frees rock from one of its invisible tyrannies. "I try to put myself in the place of the sounds," he says, "and I come to understand how they don't necessarily want to be there. People have put them there for their own convenience, but we've got to really let the vibrations go, let them be free."

The desire to free music from culturally imposed constraints, allowing it to resonate of its own accord, is integral to all Haino's music. He has long been an obsessive collector of ethnic instruments, his house in Tokyo an Aladdin's cave of rare instruments. Studying his collection, he surmised that Western instrumentation had conspired to constrain music by ridding it of drone strings. "The drone is like the place where the music can reverberate of its own accord," he speculated. "The most mysterious part of the instruments has been systematically stripped away. In its place, the piano becomes the main instrument, and as I see it, a directing influence." The piano's set tonal palette and its very weight make it an immovable presence that subordinates other instruments, destroying the pre-existing balance. His love for medieval music, especially troubadour music, is connected to its lack of keyboards and, by extension, a single dominating voice.

He declares that the piano has no place in rock or in Fushitsusha, for it signifies a selfconscious awareness of intellectual process, followed by an urge to break music down by endlessly classifying and categorising it. In the process, music as a mysterious totality, a universe in itself, is destroyed.

Haino has guided Fushitsusha through their numerous incarnations, from duo to trio to the quartet that recorded their first album. Then after a long run through most of the 90s as a rock trio, Fushitsusha returned to their original duo format, this time with Haino creating real-time loops of his own drumming to play guitar against. The remarkable, claustrophobic results are audible on this year's PSF release, *Origin's Hesitation*. Even so, it's surprising that Haino can't find Fushitsusha a drummer. "I think there are probably some drummers out there who have the technique, who could learn to play my rhythms,"he agrees. "But that is entirely different from whether they have the desire to play those rhythms." Training drummers to play in Fushitsusha his way made him increasingly uneasy, raising issues of control and freedom. The will to rock, rather than the pure ability to do so is what the group needs, Haino argues, adding that he now uses Aihiyo to deal with his straighter rock output, saving Fushitsusha for the creation of the massively heavy, fully immersive self-contained universes at which the group always excelled. On albums like *Pathetique* (1994) and *I Saw It! That Which Before I Could Only Sense...* (Paratactile 1999), with its epic 90 minute title track, you can hear how Haino has stretched rock's sense of itself as a music of heightened moments almost to infinity. Haino happily concurs, continuing, "The best thing about music, especially when I'm playing live, is that I can manage to lose my self, I can possess the will to move faster than time. People often talk about my music as lacking fullness or structure, but I want to create a totality in the instant. A totality is not found in the flow of time as most people believe, and I have no doubt that it is possible to show the whole in the moment. For me, that's what music is."

Fushitsusha embody Haino's mysterious universe more than any of his other manifestations. The ideas are slippery, and Haino prefers to talk about them in terms of imagery. "I am always talking about total darkness," he says (like you hadn't guessed), "a state where nothing existed. In that darkness a wound, more like some kind of line appeared, and then things divided. Not really divided as such, but you become aware of this side and that side. It comes down to music being born when there was an awareness of that other side, the side where nothing exists. My eternal theme is thus: why does music come into existence, is something making it? That's why I always talk about there being no beginnings and no ends."

Conscious of the social conditioning and control aspects of language, Haino's lyrics employ a strictly controlled vocabulary within a slippery syntax. They are deceptively simple, as he points out, "A child could understand my lyrics, but you can also read as many meanings into them as you want." Words like wound, prayer, time, birth, and trap recur, suggesting a Gnostic view of the universe with the world devised as a deliberate trap for mankind. Some of the language twists Haino puts his words through are virtually impossible to reproduce in English, but a particular favourite is the blurring of active and passive voices. Subjects both act and are acted upon, victims become perpetrators, or as one of his album titles has it, beginning and end are interwoven. The lyrics mirror the live experience, where Haino appears to be both in control and possessed, freezing the deadly awareness of time for the duration and thereby binding performer, audience and space into one. The purpose of music, he suggests, is to rejoin man to the universe. "If you take it that human beings are incomplete, then that means that the universe, time and space all exist separately from us, and life becomes like continuously struggling upstream. All the time, we're thinking where did all this come from? Where is the source? But we shouldn't try and find a source for it all – because this stops us becoming the universe itself."

Seeing Keiji Haino so thoroughly immersed in his own universe, his critics accuse him of cocooning himself against the real world. On the contrary, his creations grow out of *contact* with the real world. In Stirling, Aihiyo's version of The Rolling Stones/Marianne Faithful song "As Tears Go By" contained lines explicitly criticising American actions in Afghanistan. "Recently my thoughts are constantly on what's happening there," he elucidates. "The Americans use the word 'justice' to disguise their own selfish ends. The idea that there's only one kind of justice, one meaning, one answer. They try to limit the meaning of justice, and that's simply dictatorial. They're like selfish children, wanting everything they see."

Anger about events in Afghanistan awakens in Haino longstanding grievances about what he perceives as the damage done to Japan by American and European cultural imperialism. "I think that there are few races in history whose height and weight, whose physical characteristics have changed as much as Japan's has over the past 30 years," Haino begins, estimating that the average height of Japanese children has changed by at least 20cm, largely due to a more Westernised diet. "Clearly, this is an invasion," he continues, somewhat ambiguously. "Our bodies and the ways we think are being changed. I'd like the Japanese to wake up to this fact."

Though ambiguously worded, it would be a mistake to interpret Haino's statements as a reactionary defence of Japanese racial purity. They should be read in the context of his eternal warriness of authority in any form, and his advocacy of uniqueness, which he sees threatened by changes in Japanese physiology.

It is ironic that Haino's denunciations of Western cultural imperialism are triggered by his love of rock music. In the early 1970s, when he first became involved with music, music magazines were dominated by a longrunning and impassioned debate about whether you could sing rock 'n' roll in Japanese. The rhythms and intonation of English were essential to rock's edge, where Japanese was too tonally flat and regular to make the grade, it was argued. As a result, groups like Happy End began singing in Japanese, but using English intonation. The domination of English language rock stunted the development of a truly Japanese rock culture, in Haino's eyes. "If they sang in Japanese just once, they'd soon realise that rock 'n' roll won't fit into eight-beat rhythms. And if they'd realised that then I believe that all they could do would be to develop new rhythms. That would have created Japanese rock."

When Haino first descended into the Japanese underground, he briefly flirted with the idea of joining one of the many radical theatre groups, headed by figures like Shuji Terayama, that proliferated in late 1960s Tokyo. For a while the teenage Haino was entranced by their Artaud-like multi-dimensional creativity. He recalled in a 1991 interview, "It's got words, it's got movement, it's got sound. I suppose that I was attracted by the idea of an expressive medium that could have a total power. Especially since everyone is attracted to the idea of power in their teens." However, he couldn't shake his suspicion of these same groups' totalitarian power structures. Besides, he was never a natural joiner. "As a kid I used to break open a watermelon and see all the seeds neatly lined up inside," he once said, smiling. "I'd mess them all up. I hated anything that was regulated... From my early teens the idea of a group made my skin crawl."

A fortuitous encounter with The Doors led him to change course. For Keiji Haino, The Doors' epic "When The Music's Over" was the decisive break. He recalls, "Once I heard that song, I knew that this was far more amazing than becoming an underground actor. I started playing music straight away." Other rare imported records provided vividly different flashes of inspiration: Arthur Brown's "Fire", ESP-Disk vocalist Patty Waters, and especially Robert Plant's singing on "You Shook Me". "Plant's voice on that track, the way he uses his voice as an instrument, smashed my view of music wide open," Haino fondly reminisces, before quickly drawing a distinction between voice and vocals: "Voice has nothing to do with perverse, forced theories. Voice occurs when continually screamed vocals speed up and reach a place beyond the formation of words. Like when a hard rock singer is really going for it, his voice suddenly jumps into a really high pitch."

First and foremost, Haino has always seen himself as a singer, giving special significance to his early experiences in the Tokyo music scene. He first joined a John Mayall-inspired blues group that churned out extended cover versions in Tokyo beer gardens. Other short-lived units had a more experimental bent, such as Jikkyo Rokuon (Live Recording), and the delightfully monickered Holden Caulfield Band. But his first significant entry was Lost Aaraaf, whose unusual name was borrowed from an early cosmic poem by Edgar Allen Poe. "It was all about seeing how crazy I could go, seeing how far I could push my voice," he told a journalist in 1998. "There were no rules or regulations, only me. It wasn't about the beat or the harmony, it was about just doing something then and there." Soon after their formation in July 1970, they wrangled their way onto a festival promoted as Japan's answer to Woodstock, but with one crucial difference: a mere 100 fans showed up. Still, Lost Aaraaf's fully improvised rock must have made a startling impression, since they became a regular fixture on the festivals around which the scene revolved. The most significant was the August 1971 Nihon Gen'yasai Festival, held in protest against the construction of a new airport. Part of Lost Aaraaf's set was documented on the live double album that followed. The set was later reissued in its entirety on a disc in the *Soul's*

True Love box set. This early in his career, Haino's approach to music was almost fully formed. With drums and keyboards laying down a frenzied, enthusiastic barrage of notes of varying densities and minimal forward motion, Lost Aaraaf made a bizarre hybrid of free blowing and exaggerated horror movie atmospherics. But what really lifted the group was Haino's extraordinary singing. He had clearly taken on board Plant's use of the voice as instrument, screaming, spluttering and shrieking through the registers like one possessed. The music once whipped the group into such a frenzy that they enacted a black mass on stage with the sacrifice of a chicken. "It was a mistake, a crime," recalls Haino, with a shudder of regret. "Killing an animal on stage, and for what? For the sake of a silly performance Just thinking about it today depresses me " The act turned Haino into a lifelong vegetarian.

Lost Aaraaf began from a place beyond words or, as Haino terms it, an "absolute distrust of words". Over the course of the group's existence, he reversed towards the opposite pole. Poe's influential poem spins a syntactically complex web of words so dense, the rhythm implodes and the brain's search for meaning is cudgelled into abject sensory submission. In later Lost Aaraaf, Haino similarly attempted to overwhelm the audience with thick flows of prewritten characters, images, situations. "I wanted to use words," Haino remembers. "I believed in the magic that words possess. What I wanted to do back then was to pile up words over time, so that they would all take on the same meaning, and then finally it would be as though the words would vanish."

Haino has often talked about his desire to hear every piece of music ever recorded, treating his dedicated listening habits as a continuation of his quest to restore music to its original state of wholeness. Sifting the history of recorded sound, he picks fragments of Syd Barrett, Thelonious Monk, Blue Cheer, Marlene Dietrich, troubadour songs, Xenakis, Hossein Alizadeh, Beefheart, and Inuit songs, reassembling them to make music whole. Even acknowledging this desire to reframe his search for the origin of sound through listening, his most recent manifestation as a Tokyo DJ still comes as quite a surprise

For several months now, Haino has been working on a one man project called Ongaku No Himitsu (The Secret Of Music), for which he deploys prerecorded samples that permit him to play around 40 different instruments simultaneously During one such performance, it struck him that this was pretty much what a DJ does, only with other people's records Drawing on the same processes behind his rock performances, Haino as DJ sets out to focus on the instantaneous creation of a totality that sucks in and transcends the music it is based on. Typically, however, Haino is witheringly scornful of the DJs he has seen in action, criticising their mixing skills and musical consciousness as being too concerned with a simple linear flow. "They're still at the level of joining dots into a two-dimensional line, still unaware of the third dimension," he blasts.

In contrast, he describes his own DJ sets as polyphonic, "existing in more than one direction, creating links in multiple planes simultaneously". Using decks, four CD players, a four-channel mixer and a box of 100 CDs, he aims at combinations that everyone else would shy away from. "There's nothing that doesn't work together," Haino concludes, "but that's probably because I've selected all the music myself. The link already exists " *A solo percussion video* Nanimo Kamo Solo Percussion, *and the Haino/Ruins project* Knead *have just been released on PSF. A new studio album from Vajra is due on PSF in late July Thanks to Motochika Kinoshita and David Keffer for their help with this article*

MAN AND HIS CYMBALS HAINO AT HOME IN TOKYO, JUNE 2002

DIVINE

JOHN COLTRANE DIED OF LIVER CANCER 35 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, BURNED OUT BY THE INCREASING INTENSITY OF HIS MUSICAL QUEST. IN THIS PERSONAL MEMOIR OF THE FINAL YEARS OF COLTRANE'S CAREER, HOWARD MANDEL RECALLS THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE EFFECT OF COLTRANE'S LATER PERIOD MUSIC AS HE PLUNGED INTO A CREATIVE KAMIKAZE STRIKE AS SELF-DESTRUCTIVE AS IT WAS HALLOWED, FUELLED BY HALLUCINOGENICS, MYSTIC FERVOUR AND A BELIEF IN MUSIC'S POWER TO UNITE THE HUMAN RACE

It was a warm August evening almost 40 years ago when I heard John Coltrane live at the peak of his powers, and I didn't know what to make of him. A thick-set man wearing a tight fitting sharkskin suit, beaming a relentless stream of notes from the horn of his saxophone, surrounded by a motley gaggle of musicians shaking and beating a variety of hand percussion; another saxophonist standing nearby; a rhythm section rolling away for half an hour without a pause. All of this without announcements or introductions, and all taking place just 100 yards away on a stage set up at the far end of a vast outdoor stadium. The group was playing to maybe 7000 listeners in a section of concrete bleachers that could have held at least twice as many. Vendors walked through the stands hawking Coke and ice cream.

The occasion was on 15 August 1965, at the *Down Beat* Jazz Festival in Chicago's lakefront Soldier Field, where years later I would review the likes of The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and Peter Frampton for a daily newspaper. On those occasions the entire place was full to its capacity, topped out at 50,000 people. For the jazz festival, attendance was spotty. But the music certainly had enduring power.

A full afternoon of jazz had already passed, and there was more to come. Listeners came and went during the day-long programme, which featured Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Dave Brubeck, Stan Getz, the Woody Herman Band, Gerry Mulligan, singer Joe Williams and Thelonious Monk's Quartet besides Coltrane, who had been scheduled to appear with his regular quartet partners Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner. I recognised Brubeck's "Take Five" and was excited by "Blue Rondo À La Turk"; I liked Getz, who played bossanovas, and Monk, though I was impatient with Charlie Rouse's sax blowing. I was a precocious little brat, and turned up my nose at Herman's and Mulligan's sets. Wasn't jazz supposed to be a black thing?

I was 14 years old, attending a concert with a school pal, for the first time without anyone's mother or father as a chaperone. According to Yasuhiro Fujioka's *John Coltrane: A Discography And Musical Biography*, the classic quartet performed "Nature Boy" and "Blue Valse" for 36 minutes, with Archie Shepp guesting as a second soloist. I was never clear about what happened or how the music gained its oversized impact, but I knew immediately that Coltrane's set was unlike anything else on the bill. In the 90s, saxophonist Dave Liebman sent me a cassette of this performance, and no wonder it had mystified me: it was way beyond my experience. Shepp was ripping with a fierce growl through an extended uptempo improvisation that veered far from the main themes of either "Nature Boy" or "Blue Valse". He and Coltrane were supported by a seemingly random clatter of shakers and tambourines; the pianist dropped out of the discernible action soon after the pieces had got off the ground.

Back then I'd been digging some of the quirkier R&B radio hits such as Gene Chandler's "Duke Of Earl", The Capitols' "Cool Jerk", and Ramsey Lewis's funky piano trio instrumental, "The In Crowd". The hipster parents of another friend had introduced me to mid-50s Miles Davis quintet recordings including "'Round Midnight" (on the album *'Round About Midnight*), on which Coltrane made a dramatic tenor entrance, and I had been obsessively spinning a compilation of big band tracks that my folks had received as a cigarette company promotion. I was old enough to realise something momentous was happening between Chicago's white and black populations, but didn't grasp all the implications of the Civil Rights struggle. I was friendly towards the kids at school who didn't live in the same neighbourhood as my friends and I. Not having

any athletic interests, jazz seemed like the good, safe, entertaining thing we might share.

But John Coltrane's post-1965 music, from the blazing ensemble free-for-all of *Ascension*, through the exotic fug of mystic works like *Om* and *Kulu Sé Mama*, to the superhuman endurance feats he was achieving on his live dates (eventually to be documented on the double album *Live In Seattle* and the quadruple CD *Live In Japan*), wasn't an easy vehicle for traversing common ground. Jazz already had the curse of being an adult music, abstract and somehow uncomfortably funny. When I slipped jazz on the record player at parties or hangout sessions it drew giggles and guffaws: it was as if someone had started lecturing earnestly in a foreign language. Soul music, especially Motown, was cool; everyone loved Aretha Franklin and Dionne Warwick, The Temptations and Smokey Robinson, Little Stevie Wonder, Martha And The Vandellas, The Supremes and Marvin Gaye. The blues, for which Chicago was becoming famous, had some credibility with my cohorts thanks to local heroes like Paul Butterfield and Mike Bloomfield, if not Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf – like jazz perhaps, black blues was at once too close to home and too alien to be fully embraced. Fear of the Other prevailed in and around Chicago; to trek to the black South Side blues clubs was an adventure declined by most of my high school classmates. Exploring avant garde jazz, even on LP in the comfort of one's living room, was an equally remote inclination.

And yet John Coltrane was no stranger to jazz-oriented Midwesterners. Drummer Jack DeJohnette and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell, both from Chicago, sat in with the saxophonist at his March 1966 gig at the Plugged Nickel – though at that point neither of them were familiar to most young white wannabes of the era; and the legal drinking age of 21 precluded teenagers from getting into the club. I would occasionally cajole a friend or escort a date to a concert at University of Chicago or Northwestern, or to a coffee house or art gallery, to hear the richly expressive music of Lester Bowie, Joseph Jarman, Muhal Richard Abrams, Henry Threadgill, Leroy Jenkins, Anthony Braxton, Kalaparusha Ara Difda, Fred Anderson and other AACM members, but hardly anyone would go with me a second time. The long collective improvisations typified by saxophone histrionics and other instrumental extremes, the diffused rhythms and dissonant or atonal or a-melodic backdrops, the eerie air of African-American spirituality and the rampant rhetoric of black nationalism put off more of my generation than were attracted.

During 1966, though, a few trendsetters at my upscale suburban high school began to flaunt their copies of *A Love Supreme*. Its black and white jacket conveyed the bearer's integrationist allegiance, almost as if one was walking down the hall arm in arm with the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. There was nothing comical about Coltrane's halftone portrait on the front cover; it represented him as a man of heroically modest stature, a grown-up caught off-guard, thinking of something bigger than posing for an album cover photo. The prayer Coltrane wrote for the inner sleeve was dismissably exotic to most of us, and suitably sombre in keeping with our mission to appear elevated. Then there was the matter of the music itself, into which we could genuinely relax.

We heeded the saxophone call with which Coltrane opened 'Acknowledgement", were soothed by the warmth of his tone and chided by his occasional gruffness. We were cradled by Jimmy Garrison's bass ostinato, rocked by McCoy Tyner's piano chords, stirred by the waves of Elvin Jones's drums, grounded by the musicians' chant. The subdued mood of "Acknowledgement" flattered our adolescent

PHOTO: FRANK KOFSKY COURTESY BONNIE KOFSKY

PREVIOUS PAGE: JOHN COLTRANE GROUP AT THE VILLAGE THEATER, NEW YORK, 26 DECEMBER 1966 LEFT TO RIGHT: SONNY JOHNSON, JIMMY GARRISON, ALICE COLTRANE (BEHIND PIANO), JOHN COLTRANE, RASHIED ALI, OMAR ALI, ALGIE DEWITT. RIGHT: JOHN COLTRANE AT THE HALF NOTE, NEW YORK, 1965

despondencies, before the turnaround of "Resolution" saved us from the slough of despair. Tyner's solo was readily comprehensible and Coltrane's variations were hypnotic, though he would often deliberately break the spell with a splintered cry at the peak of a phrase. Jones's minute and a half intro to "Pursuance" kicked the ass of any drumming we had ever heard; Coltrane's theme was fast and Tyner's break was pretty. Upon his return, the saxophonist and the drummer locked in to one of those driving movements that silenced any doubters, allowing us to indulge Garrison's flamenco flourish of a bass solo. Finally, "Psalm" let us float out of time, with the sense of being older and wiser for having sat through a Coltrane Quartet masterpiece. 33 minutes was not too much time to trade for such righteous gratification.

A certain solipsism affects each jazz lover's listening history. We grow in steps marked not by the actual history of the artists who influence us, but rather by the order in which we are exposed to their works, whenever they were created. And so for me, Coltrane's advance (and mine) after *A Love Supreme* has nothing to do with his addition of bassist Art Davis to his quartet for expansive versions of Nat 'King' Cole's "Nature Boy" and the Mary Poppins waltz "Chim Chim Cheree"; nor the summer 65 rendition of "A Love Supreme" at the Antibes Jazz Festival (12 minutes longer than the studio version); nor his final suite, *Meditations*, recorded with a second saxophonist and second drummer in September of that year. Instead, my next impression arrived as a perk with my first subscription to *Down Beat*, in the autumn of 66. The free gift was Coltrane's *Live At The Village Vanguard Again!*, documenting the relatively recent events of the night of 28 May.

The album cover depicted Coltrane's mostly new supporting cast in front of the club on the afternoon of the gig, in a snapshot by the redoubtable photographer Charles 'Chuck' Stewart. Bassist Garrison, a veteran of Coltrane's classic quartet, looked like a Caribbean cricket player in a madras short sleeve shirt, shorts, and white socks up to his calves. Pianist Alice McLeod wore a pink skirt, white top, open raincoat and dark hose; she was holding Jimmy's hand but looking at Coltrane, the father of her two sons (they married the following August), who stood next to her under a white snap-brimmed cap, his dark tie askew and his gaze fixed on something out of the frame. Pharoah Sanders stood stiff with a glazed grin, carrying a soprano saxophone case. He wore a black suit like Coltrane's, but with brown shoes and his sax strap around his neck. Drummer Rashied Ali, black suited and brown-turtlenecked, stood at the picture's edge, slightly bent as if ready to step into action. But the group's casual pose was completely belied by the contents of the recording, which listed only two tunes on the turquoise reverse of its jacket: "Naima" and "My Favorite Things".

I remember eagerly slipping the album on, sitting down to read my *Down Beat*, and being immediately distracted from the print, astonished. I tried "My Favorite Things" first, and never having heard Coltrane's bestselling Atlantic version, I couldn't find the Richard Rodgers melody anywhere in it (my error: it emerges about five minutes into Coltrane's initial soprano solo, and Pharoah quotes it, too). Nor could I recognise a steady beat, or any plan that guided the pianist's chordal accompaniment (though now I believe it's Alice's most rangy, nuanced, *secular* recording). Even after a second listening, and a third, fourth, fifth, I wasn't sure how many horn players there were. Coltrane and Sanders created a storm that struck me as more intense than only two could construe. There was a flute, identified by Nat Hentoff in his liner notes as being played by "Pharoah"; he also wrote that Coltrane played bass clarinet during their "dialogues". I still can't hear that – and when Coltrane re-enters on soprano after Pharoah's tenor solo, I still hear more than two horns. As Lewis Porter reports in *John Coltrane: His Life And Music* that Eric Dolphy's mother gave her late son's instruments to Coltrane, and since Dolphy was such an incisive presence throughout Coltrane's original Village Vanguard sessions, can we assume his spirit is at least evoked, if not summoned, by this maelstrom?

I flipped the LP to side one and listened to "Naima", which was beauteous and lyrical – intimate and intense, giving me the image of a full-bodied woman wrapped in jungle vines. Again, Alice's chords provided a backdrop more like a beaded curtain caught by a breeze than conventionally propulsive comping; again, Ali swirled up rhythms as if attending to several simmering pots. Someone plays a lot of tambourine. Garrison didn't 'walk' on the bass, he throbbed with it. After "Naima", he set up side two with a five minute bass solo, again testing my patience. So I used to skip to the ensemble "My Favorite Things". But I still didn't hear it as I do today.

At what point did the later Coltrane efforts cohere for me? I might date it from the season I became immersed in *Meditations*, the more tempestuous long-form follow-up to *A Love Supreme*, coming to understand the logic that meant the sumptuous, sensuous movement "Love" could only issue *after* the scourge of "The Father And The Son And The Holy Ghost" and the rigours of "Compassion". Yes, it took a while more – but what does it matter? I was a kid, my

PHOTO RAYMOND ROSS

reactions weren't well-informed, and I didn't consider myself part of Coltrane's target audience, even though Impulse! Records producer Bob Thiele may have figured it was kids like me who, by 1970, would make *A Love Supreme* a gold record, with retail sales of 500,000.

And if that were the case, why not? Coltrane was an inclusionary humanist, making it increasingly, specifically clear through his interviews that he had ambitious spiritual goals. By referencing Indian, Brazilian, Latin and European classical musics, he also indicated that he was now open to all the world's culture. Thiele did well to target the burgeoning youth market, which was buying records as no generation had before. He must have been aware that his figurehead artist's new music was losing some of his core followers, including those musicians who had supported his career from his early days in Philadelphia through his ascendancy with Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk.

Jimmy Heath, for instance – with whom Coltrane had shared the lead alto chair in Dizzy Gillespie's group in the late 40s, said in a 1990 interview for the video documentary *The Coltrane Legacy*, "I liked the Coltrane who played melodies, because he had a quality of sound that was like no other saxophonist before him or after. I didn't think he needed any other saxophone players. When he added Eric Dolphy, and Pharoah and Archie, I didn't think that was necessary. I thought it was too much. Because he played enough saxophone for 100 guys himself."

So why did Coltrane take that route? "Well, he was trying to break away from using the chords," Heath proposed, "and he found that some of the younger musicians were more daring and had fewer ties to conventional harmonies. They were freer, and he chose that direction to go in... So some of the things he did I didn't particularly like. One record that comes into mind, that I never played but once, was *Ascension*. I forget how many people were all playing at once on it! They were supposed to be listening to each other, but I had heard New Orleans music with people playing collective improvisation, and it sounded better. When I heard this, I didn't take to it."

Frank Foster, the tenor saxophonist who brought bebop modernism to the mid-50s Count Basie band, felt likewise. As quoted in Ashley Kahn's forthcoming book *A Love Supreme*, Foster says, "I thought *Ascension* was a little extreme, but he [Coltrane] was always my man. I agreed with some who said, 'Coltrane's experimenting. He's done just about everything that can be done with a tenor saxophone, so now he's trying to reach out for something else'."

Coltrane's experimentalism, driven by his determination to reach beyond what he had found to ever higher ground, was not confined to his music, although that aspect of his character found its greatest public fulfilment and expression there. *Ascension*, recorded in June 1965, was an explicitly transcendental effort, through which he hoped to lift off from his own limits by drawing on the energies of others. Besides convening Sanders, Shepp and bassist Art Davis, all of whom had previously supplemented Tyner, Garnson and Jones in studio and live performances, Coltrane enlisted alto saxophonists Marion Brown and John Tchicai and trumpeters Freddie Hubbard and Dewey Johnson for two 40 minute extrapolations of a simple theme, marathons which his traditionalist fans regarded as chaotic free-for-alls.

The structure for *Ascension* was indeed without elaborate melodic or harmonic directions; it was merely an outline that even encouraged each participant to contribute directly from their deepest aspirations, without presenting any demands that might compromise their spontaneity or individuality. By sheer weight and volume of the air the 11 men moved, *Ascension* struck many of us not overly invested in song-derived standards as monumental. The recording's density, though, rendered it virtually opaque. How could a listener pierce the many levels of activity, and achieve an overview of the collective's contradictory impulses?

The easy answer was to use drugs. Of course dope, a prevalent recreation among 60s rebels, had long been associated with jazz and seemed to offer some enhancement of the listening experience, whether by intensifying perceptions or focusing attentions it's never been clear. Heroin use, which had decimated the bebop generation and been conquered by Coltrane in the 50s, did not hold broad appeal for the collegiate types who would delve into extreme dissonance in hopes of enlightenment. LSD, on the other hand, had been famously celebrated as a key to unlock the Doors of Perception.

"Trane took acid. No doubt about it," shrugs his biographer Lewis Porter. "Plenty of people talked to me about his heroin and alcohol use, though all four who talked to me confirming his acid experience wanted it off the record. I don't know why that's so scary. JC Thomas [author of *Chasin' The Trane*, the first published book-length biography] wrote that he was tripping either at the time or around the time that he recorded *Om* [6 October 1965]. Apparently he did a lot of LSD during the last period of his life. Some people have used that against him – that explains why his late music is so crazy. But that's one of the reasons I wanted to analyze "Venus" [from *Interstellar Space*,

COLTRANE GROUP AT THE OLATUNJI CULTURAL CENTER, NEW YORK, 23 APRIL 1967

recorded 22 February 1967] in my last chapter. Coltrane was too accomplished a musician for all his history to disappear."

As Coltrane's skills had not been irredeemably dulled during the depths of his heroin dependency (when Thelonious Monk had shouted "Coltrane! Coltrane!" at the end of his own "Epistrophy" solo on *Monk's Music*, it was to awaken the saxophonist from a nod, and elicited an exciting, solid Coltrane chorus), neither was his technical facility evidently blunted by LSD. In one of my own isolated attempts as a university student to lead a free jam while tripping on psylocybin, I thoroughly enjoyed the convincing misapprehension of having much more than my usual limited musical abilities at my command. Imagine what saxophone speed and control Coltrane, a compulsive practiser, might have believed he had at his fingertips. Consider what harmonies he might have discovered in what others perceive as dissonance, what shapeliness he may have distinguished in sounds commonly identified as disorderly, what underlying pulses he could have sensed uniting ostensibly unconnected incidents.

Concentration under the influence of psychedelics can be problematic. Yet LSD does a number on the listener's time sense as well as the musician's. It is not inconceivable that exposure to *Ascension* or any other of Coltrane's open-form later productions (*Om*, *Selflessness*, *Expression*, *Cosmic Music*) after ingesting acid might seem to offer insights that are less accessible to the untreated mind.

Still, the self-absorption accentuated by drug use – and emblematic of any spiritual quest – is counterproductive to making things happen in spheres outside the self. Although Coltrane titled compositions both prior to and after *A Love Supreme* for events and individuals linked to the American Civil Rights movement, it may not be coincidental that at its height, when established jazz musicians including Max Roach and Charles Mingus had gone explicitly political and the avant garde was being identified by poet/critic Amiri Baraka's phrase "black music", Coltrane's New Thing didn't endear him to mainstream jazz's black audiences.

Porter's Coltrane biography cites an incident in a Newark nightclub late in 66, during which "the [black] audience and manager became hostile and insisted that he play some of his old standards .. the gig was actually cancelled after the first night." According to Nat Hentoff, this problem affected not just Trane, but the growing school of free stylists – represented by Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman – that he championed. "Their predecessors, at the start of their [bebop] revolution, at least were able to work in urban Negro [sic] neighbourhoods," Hentoff wrote in an article published in May 1965. "But the current avant garde, also predominately Negro, has stirred minimal interest in the Negro nightclubs. Thus the present revolutionaries have even fewer places in which to play than did Monk and Parker."

In response, Coltrane – like Ornette Coleman, Sam Rivers and others – relied increasingly on engagements outside the club circuit, taking his music to campuses, festivals, lofts, churches and community centres. But even musicians who these days thrive in just such venues as avatars of the avant garde then questioned Coltrane's approach. "You can get almost as avant garde as you want to be, as long as you keep that steady pulse," says saxophonist David S Ware, who in 66 regularly travelled to Manhattan from his home in New Jersey to hear Coltrane. "Coltrane lost a lot of people when he broke time, and went into that other world and started messing with that multi-directional time."

Rashied Ali's drum concept, first described as "multi-directional" by Coltrane himself, can today be understood as a natural outgrowth of the polyrhythmic accomplishments of Elvin Jones and Sunny Murray. Though it's hard to distinguish Ali's contributions from Jones's on *Meditations*, his fast hands, fine touch and collaborative sensitivity to Coltrane's playing are readily apparent on *Interstellar Space*, their unprecedented album of duets. Coltrane didn't need other saxophonists, trumpeters, extra bassists or anything but a trap kit to complete his vision. *Interstellar Space* stands as music from on high, sent back to Earth from some place elemental, mysterious and grand.

"Mars", "Venus", "Jupiter" and "Saturn", the four tracks initially released on LP (two more, "Leo" and "Jupiter Variation", were included in the 1991 reissue on GRP/Impulse!) comprise a very loose suite, linked by the two men's investigations of motifs relating to those planets' distances from the sun, and the zodiac attributes of the Roman gods for whom they're named (respectively, from the liner notes: "battlefield of the cosmic giants, love, supreme wisdom, joy"). Coltrane's tenor sax dominates, howling with enormous urgency across light years of space/time, conveying a human heart at the core of it all. Ali rises to every opportunity, projecting a fluid pace and compressed hyperactivity from the start, going his own way boldly or shadowing Coltrane closely (as when using brushes on the balladic "Venus") but never forcing him into a pattern or a tempo. Together, the two of them have the force and authority of an orchestra.

PHOTO FRANK KOFSKY COURTESY BONNIE KOFSKY

"The way he plays allows the soloist maximum freedom," Coltrane famously said of Ali to free jazz polemicist Frank Kofsky. "He's laying down multi-directional rhythms all the time." There's no slackening of dynamic tension, either, when Ali solos, as on the two and a half minute intro to "Saturn", *Interstellar*'s 11 minute climactic track.

Then as now, Ali churned up abstractions – far-flung tangents in a near-chaotic galaxy – as well as continuous propulsion disdaining regularities, without completely abandoning the heartbeat. Ali's centre of sonic gravity was higher than that of Jones, pinned to the cymbals and snare more than bass drum and toms. He would swing in the classic sense if Coltrane gave him reason to do so, and he could dig an explicit pocket, though he seldom instituted a conventional tattoo or cliche. During his two year tenure with Coltrane, obviously a time of enormous challenge and consequent accelerated growth, he ventured into a universe of possibilities, offering his mentor flat-out vigour, stimulation and instant response.

"Trane was bigger than life," Ali says now, "and whatever he stepped into he would command. Me, I was playing with my idol, and I had more confidence in my ability than in my conception. I felt not unprepared, but apprehensive.

"I never knew what Trane was going to do, and he never told me what to do, so I did what I could to make it comfortable. I drew from the straightahead conceptions, yes, and I can't forget Elvin, because I got so much from him. Elvin brought so much to the music, without Elvin there wouldn't have been no Trane. I was like an extension of Elvin. I had to move on from what he did, though, same way that in my straightahead stuff I was always trying to find something else to do.

"I wasn't always sure of what I did then, because I didn't get a chance to sit down and listen to the playbacks. We'd record and that was the last time I'd hear it. I'd damn near forget it until I'd hear it again," he admits. "But sometimes now I listen to some Trane before I go to a gig to remind myself of something I used to do. Yeah, I'm still working from that stuff I wasn't even sure of."

In that, Ali's not alone. He and Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp and Alice Coltrane are only the most obvious veterans of the saxophonist's late, great monuments who are still dealing with that experience. All subsequent saxophonists travel in Coltrane's wake, as do most serious instrumentalists pursuing virtuosity. Almost every subgenre of jazz and improvisational music has been changed by his endeavours. Probably everyone who ever heard *A Love Supreme*, and the music Coltrane made after it, listens differently than they did before.

"I didn't know he was sick," Rashied Ali says ruefully of the saxophonist's final months. "I had no idea. I knew he was drinking juices and stuff, but he was not the kind of person that complained – not to me anyway – about being sick or anything. I just couldn't see him being sick at all, the way he played on the stage and as much power as he used to play the saxophone. I have pictures of him where he had his hands on his liver at times, he was getting pains there, and he complained sometimes about being tired, you know, being not as energetic as he usually was. But I was totally in shock when I heard that he had died that morning, 17 July 1967. We had just played at Olatunji's about two weeks before. And he was playing strong, but I noticed he was sitting down in a chair so I guess he was a little tired . . . The liver robs you of a lot of energy when it goes on the blink. And, that's all, you know. I just never really realised that he was sick enough to pass."

Actually, Coltrane's final performance had been three months earlier, but as demonstrated on *The Olatunji Concert: The Last Live Recording* (released in time to celebrate what would have been his 75th birthday, 23 September 2001) there's no hint of the cancer that ended his life at age 40. Ali, Alice Coltrane and the eternally loyal Garrison delve with an unbowed Coltrane into the moment on lengthy versions of "Ogunde" and "My Favorite Things" (on which he plays soprano, naturally), while Sanders burns alongside him with blistering heat. Their passion is undiminished after 45 years.

I don't remember where I was on 17 July, but a couple of days later I was travelling by elevated train to work at Wrigley Field, the home of the inept Chicago Cubs baseball team. I was a vendor selling Fresca, a lemon-lime carbonated diet drink, which I'd push on whatever secretaries took a day off to sit in the ballpark. It was a good job for a teenager: arrive around 10.30am, sit around until noon, walk the stands selling until about 3.30, home by 4pm with $50 cash in hand. But just as the train pulled into the stop where I would get off, I turned to my newspaper's obituary page. There was the notice of John Coltrane's death. I couldn't believe it so I read the article twice, then walked downstairs, crossed the station and walked back upstairs, to take the day off and return home, where I listened to Coltrane for hours. | *For help with this feature, thanks to Ashley Kahn, whose book* A Love Supreme: The Story Of John Coltrane's Signature Album *will be published this autumn by Granta*

The Primer

***The Wire*'s bimonthly guide to the essential recordings of a selected artist or genre. This month: David Keenan takes a scalpel to the sonic surrealism of the British underground's most reclusive figure, Steven Stapleton, and his constantly evolving group, Nurse With Wound. Illustration: Savage Pencil**

Inspiration often arrives in the unlikeliest of guises. It was Tyrannosaurus Rex's "Elemental Child" that finally pushed Steven Stapleton over the edge. He'd been spinning the song in his North London bedsit through the post-punk summer of 1978, after his desperate quest for freakout rock kicks had brought him to the depths of Marc Bolan's sloppy wah-wah soloing.

Stapleton's record collection had already been bulked with some of the most wayward music of the international underground, from The Velvet Underground's "Sister Ray", to Amon Duul's *Psychedelic Underground* and Guru Guru's *Kanguru*. Now he was ready to nail his muse, he recruited two record collecting buddies to help out. One was John Fothergill, a bookish hippy with a decadent line in moustaches and an uncle who used to be a friend of Aleister Crowley; the other was his brother's friend Heman Pathak, who Stapleton had met over a Focus LP. Though none of them had actually made any music before, they cut Nurse With Wound's 1979 debut, *Chance Meeting On A Dissecting Table Of A Sewing Machine And An Umbrella*, in the space of a few hours.

Since then, Nurse With Wound has become the nom de disque for any Stapleton project plus the artists who happen to collaborate on it. Over 23 years of ceaseless activity he has refined his compositional methods, bolstering his non-musicianly fervour with the array of esoteric and alchemical studio techniques that enable him to expand his idiosyncratic vocabulary. In the process Nurse With Wound's work has grown increasingly abstract, displacing 'ordinary' sounds – radio play snippets, detourned lounge music, the klang of metal on metal – in extraordinary situations. "Nurse music is surrealist music," Stapleton asserts. "Today surrealism has been swamped by advertising and has lost all of its purity. That's why it's down to me to carry the banner for what's genuinely odd, giving a completely different angle to the way instruments and composition are looked at." His notion of "surrealism in sound" involves channelling the murky subconscious into music that provokes certain reactions or tests particular mental states.

Like the surrealists, Stapleton is obsessed with macabre Victoriana. He is also fascinated by the body horror fetishism of mannequin artist Hans Bellmer and Viennese Actionist Rudolf Schwarzkogler, whose influences are evident in the collages and paintings adorning Nurse releases. But Stapleton's aura-popping use of humour never allowed Nurse With Wound to congeal around the kind of cliched shock tactics that held sway in the early 1980s.

Even so, Nurse With Wound have often been lazily tagged as 'Industrial'. Stapleton himself traces his points of departure to practices such as European free improvisation; the futurism of Luigi Russolo (to whom the first Nurse album was dedicated); Pierre Schaeffer's musique concrète; and the Krautrock of Faust and Guru Guru. In fact, Stapleton used to roadie for the biggest Krautrock groups when he and Pathak lived for a while in Germany, staying with legendary Neu!/Kraftwerk producer Conny Plank.

Stapleton didn't own an instrument before he made the first album and he hasn't got one now. Consequently, the Nurse sound was born out of the different creative strategies devised by a committed non-musician driven to make music. Nurse With Wound toured once, disastrously, in 1984, and since then he has been entirely studio based. Yet Stapleton is the nexus in a web of epoch-defying underground artists, linked by an intensity of vision, a shared curiosity in hidden histories and extreme esoterica, and a determination to create their own artistic universe. The lively dialogue sustained through his close ties with Current 93 and Coil informs all their music, as well as that of an inner circle of artists as diverse as Whitehouse, Christoph Heemann, gypsy violinist Aranos, The Legendary Pink Dots, Jim Thirlwell aka Foetus and Organum.

But the trajectory of Stapleton's discography tracks the arc of his life. The violent claustrophobia of early Nurse sides cut when he was cooped up in his tiny cupboard bedroom in London's East Finchley stand in stark contrast with the more expansive blooms that followed his move to a goat farm in the wilds of Western Ireland in 1989. In his initial mission statement, Stapleton might have proclaimed that he wanted to make "cold, clinical music", but his work has never been less than intensely personal.

NURSE WITH WOUND
CHANCE MEETING ON A DISSECTING TABLE OF A SEWING MACHINE AND AN UMBRELLA
UNITED DAIRIES UD001 CD 1979

Even before he had a group who could use it, Steven Stapleton first secured himself some cheap studio time through his job as a signwriter and graphic designer. He was working at the British Marketing Service's studio in Wardour Street, Central London, when he got talking to the in-house engineer, Nicky Rogers. If he ever felt like "making some noise", Rogers offered, he should give him a shout. Claiming that his group were ready, Stapleton convinced Rogers to book them in on the next weekend. He quickly prodded his aforementioned friends John Fothergill and Heman Pathak into buying some instruments for them to record. Fothergill got an electric guitar with a treble booster and a ring modulator, Pathak picked up an old keyboard, and Stapleton brought along a box of toys, tools and electronic devices. "There were no roles, none of us had even picked up an instrument before," Stapleton remembers. "We didn't even do a practice. John had only got his guitar about four days before the session but I remember him saying, 'God, it's amazing, it's so easy!' We set up and after a 30 second run-through we just went for it with no idea how long it was going to be or what form it would take. It just grew as we did it, mostly live, with very little overdubs."

Fothergill's haphazardly prepared guitar embedded barbed shards in Stapleton's conveyor-belt electronics, while Heman unfurled a drone from his heavy, Teutonic-sounding synth. Part of the studio deal included allowing Rogers to let loose on guitar. His proto-Metal lead work might sound incongruous on the first track, "Two Mock Projections" – 'It sounds like fucking Santana", groans Stapleton now – but just such bizarre juxtapositions, thrown together by chance, would later play a major part in Stapleton's surreal armoury. "The Six Buttons Of Sex Appeal" moves further out, with Fothergill's guitar mining the kind of forked vectors pioneered by Derek Bailey. This early on, they're still sounding out the extremes of their various record collections – the gravity-defying fug of early AMM, the Industrial klang of Kluster, the hallucinatory euphoria of The Mothers Of Invention – yet the music is already very much their own.

Convinced that there would be no audience for *Chance Meeting...*, Stapleton came up with an attention-grabbing cover featuring some heavy S&M drawings lifted from the front of a porno mag called *Latex And Leather Special*. The group's name, meanwhile, was coined by Fothergill's mother. "The name Nurse With Wound came from my mother," he explains. "She picked it out of a list of words that I had drawn up. 'Nurse' and 'Wound' were on the list through my passion for Francis Bacon and his painting of a screaming woman after the scene in Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin*, where a nurse is wounded in the eye on the Odessa steps."

They sold all 500 copies in three weeks. Also included with *Chance Meeting...* was the notorious 'Nurse List'. Essentially an A to Z indexing the inspirational core of their combined record collections, it still gets the most obsessive of record collectors scratching their heads. Their checklist of 'electric experimental music' runs the gamut of comparatively mainstream entries like Captain Beefheart and Yoko Ono, through obscurities like Keith Tippett's Ovary Lodge, Swedish Zappa-philes Samla Mammas Manna and American destructo-punks Debris. Stapleton maintains that some of the groups were invented, but Fothergill absolutely refutes the assertion. Well, the French group Fille Qui Mousse never had a record out at the time the list was compiled – an archive CD has just been released – otherwise Fothergill appears to be right. But chances are that nobody outside Nurse With Wound has actually heard them all.

TO THE QUIET MEN FROM A TINY GIRL
UNITED DAIRIES UD003 CD 1980
MERZBILD SCHWET
UNITED DAIRIES UD004 CD 1980

The second and third Nurse With Wound albums, *To The Quiet Men From A Tiny Girl* and *Merzbild Schwet*, were both released simultaneously on the group's United Dairies imprint. Even this early on, the cracks in the group dynamic are starting to show. Stapleton had entered the session with an idea for a pounding Industrial track based on the constant noise of the machine rhythms at the engraving studio where he worked. The trio cut a long improvisation based around double-tracked hammering and scraping sounds, creating a thunderous six track cacophony. Fothergill, however, was unhappy with the result. Insisting that they work the track some more, interspersing the noise

with passages of complete silence. In the end Stapleton gave in and allowed Fothergill to reshape the track, but he was extremely unhappy with the finished piece, "She Alone Hole And Open". He could already feel his vision being diluted through the collaborative nature of the group.

Tensions had also developed between Fothergill and Pathak, who had never properly bonded, according to Stapleton. On their second album Pathak's input was already negligible. Because his tastes had never really run along the same lines as Fothergill and Stapleton's, he decided to leave before he was frozen out. Before disappearing completely he attempted to launch his own experimental group, Hastings Of Malawi. They released a terrible album, *Vibrant Stapler Obscures Characteristic Growth*, which sold about 70 or 80 copies before one of the members' mothers threw the lot in a skip. Needless to add, its lousiness didn't stop it becoming highly collectable.

To The Quiet Men From A Tiny Girl is bolstered by the appearance of French meta-musician Jac Berrocal, alongside the "commercial guitar" of the omnipresent Nicky Rogers. Stapleton had been obsessed with Berrocal's 1976 recording *Parallèles* ever since he discovered it in a record shop on Paris's Champs-Elysées. On a second trip to Paris, he phoned Berrocal and suggested a collaboration. Berrocal still remembers the session as "the craziest, fastest session" he's ever been involved in, claiming that the amount of drugs the engineers consumed was "truly frightening". Although the Frenchman's contribution is fairly minimal, he plays pocket trumpet, Tibetan oboe and conch shell. In all, *To The Quiet Men ..* marked a confident step into new territory, despite Stapleton's reservations about "She Alone Hole And Open".

Stapleton consolidated Nurse's progress on *Merzbild Schwet*. The concessions he made on *To The Quiet Men...* bothered him to such a degree that he immediately booked a second session the following weekend. The album he recorded without Fothergill became *Merzbild Schwet*, although he was still listed as a member in the credits. Mapping hypnogogic dream states via disembodied ghost voices, savagely detourned Easy Listening and what sounds like cattle being flayed, *Merzbild Schwet* contains the seeds of the contemporary Nurse With Wound sound.

NURSE WITH WOUND/WHITEHOUSE
THE 150 MURDEROUS PASSIONS
UNITED DAIRIES UD09 CD 1981

Stapleton and Fothergill drifted further apart with the arrival of United Dairies' first 'signing', The Lemon Kittens, an art-punk group led by Karl Blake and Danielle Dax. "John was getting more and more involved with The Lemon Kittens," Stapleton recalls. "Also about that time I'd become friends with William Bennett of Whitehouse. The Lemon Kittens hated Bennett, so Fothergill started to side with them." Stapleton met Bennett after buying the first Whitehouse album, *Birthdeath Experience*, and called round at the address listed on the sleeve. For a short spell Stapleton joined Whitehouse, even participating in some of their Live Aktions. He also supplied the artwork for early Whitehouse records like 1981's *Erector*, which stands as one of the most intense, achingly funny noise records ever produced. In Bennett's uncompromising aesthetic Stapleton found a match for his increasingly monomaniacal vision. "He's a real taskmaster," Stapleton says of the Whitehouse leader. "Whatever you do he will obliterate straightaway by turning all the levels up."

1981's *The 150 Murderous Passions* is still a bone of contention between the pair, however, with each claiming he was screwed over by the other on it. Regardless, it's one of the most extreme records in Stapleton's back catalogue, with its sonorous clank of metal and extended sections of feedback suffocating beneath Bennett's predilection for recording everything in the red.

Meanwhile, things came to a head between Fothergill and Stapleton over the release of the United Dairies compilation, *Hoisting The Black Flag*, which included both The Lemon Kittens and Whitehouse. Fothergill had printed the cover sideways, meaning The Lemon Kittens' name would be read along the top. Stapleton exploded. "That was the thing that really killed me and John off," he maintains. "That and all this shit where he started up his own label and put out stuff like Experiments With Ice and The Shiny Men. I wanted United Dairies to be a label to be proud of, so I put my foot down." In the event, Fothergill's relationship with The Lemon Kittens also hit the rocks, causing him to totally withdrew from the scene. He now works for the BBC and although his tastes are as esoteric as ever, he has not made any music since.

NURSE WITH WOUND
HOMOTOPY TO MARIE
UNITED DAIRIES UD013 CD 1982

THE SYLVIE & BABS HI-FI COMPANION
UNITED DAIRIES UD072 CD 1988

Stapleton has always considered 1982's *Homotopy To Marie* to be his first 'real' record. Here's where he first discovered editing and worked out how to shape its dynamics. Around about this time he block-booked a studio every Friday night for the entire year. From 6pm to midnight, Fridays, he religiously went down to the studio almost as a way of unwinding from his job. Any money not spent on food or bills was ploughed into recording time. "That was the happiest time I ever had in the studio," he smiles. "It was great fun, every week I'd have different people down and it was just fantastic. *Homotopy To Marie* just came out of all that."

With its cover art depicting a disembowelled doll tumbling into blackness, *Homotopy To Marie* is a uniquely disturbing record. Less conventionally 'musical' than its predecessors, Stapleton's jumpcuts set up some chilling juxtapositions. Children's voices float through the fog while gongs and metal percussion curdle the air. His use of silence is also highly unnerving, especially when it is usurped by distant groans and long, arching drones. A rigorous logic guides Stapleton's arrangements. Sometimes he structures parts around correspondences based on the slightest timbral similarity; elsewhere he triggers chains of musical events with a single word or half-heard sound. Stapleton describes it as "automating", a term he lifted from Twiggs Jameson's 1968 novel *Billy And Betty* (used as a euphemism for masturbating), while also giving the nod to the spontaneous automatic writing technique pioneered by surrealist André Breton.

Recorded in 1985, *The Sylvie & Babs Hi-Fi Companion* provides some much needed light relief. 'Babs Santini' is the alter-ego Stapleton uses as a credit for most of his artwork, while 'Sylvie & Babs' are a fictitious pair of cheesecake pin-ups, fronting a parody of the kind of Easy Listening LPs that lined bargain bins in the 70s and 80s. With *Sylvie & Babs* . Stapleton consciously attempted to make a very different kind of Nurse record. Although he had not intended to play on it himself, once in the studio, inevitably, he just couldn't keep his hands off and ended up playing on most of it. "I wanted to make a record that was all stolen from other people's records," he says. "That was when I first really discovered that I loved Easy Listening so much. I had to make a foray into the bargain bins to find all this shit and then listen through to it to find the bits I liked. To my horror I loved it all. I even bought myself a James Last record!" With an all-star cast featuring Jim Thirlwell, Edward Ka-Spel, William Bennett, David Tibet, David Jackman and Karl Blake, *Sylvie & Babs* sounds close to the plunderphonia of Stock, Hausen & Walkman or John Oswald. His drunken lounge anthems are rendered limbless, even as they're undermined by the dying croak of electricity. Here's the spiked cocktail party to end them all.

SPIRAL INSANA
UNITED DAIRIES UD073 CD 1986

SOLILOQUY FOR LILITH
UNITED DAIRIES UD035 2XCD 1988

THUNDER PERFECT MIND
UNITED DAIRIES UD040 CD 1992

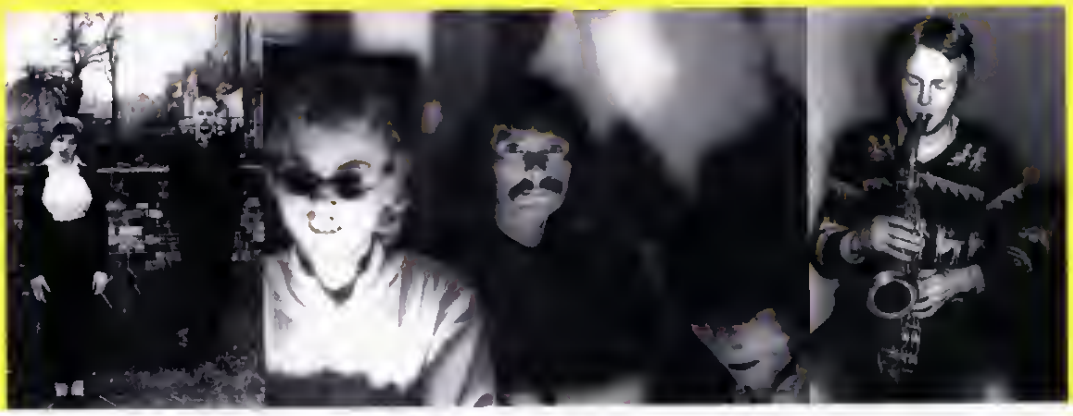
"*Spiral Insana* reduced me to tears," confesses Edward Ka-Spel, Stapleton's longtime friend and member of fellow sonic surrealists The Legendary Pink Dots. Undoubtedly, it is one of Stapleton's most powerful records: thick with an elemental melancholy, the desolate set is characterised by vivid, serpentine electronics. Despite his avowed desire to detach himself from the music-making process, all Stapleton's records are autobiographical to a varying degree. But this one feels particularly close to the bone.

Ironically, possibly his most personal record was born of his first ever recording deal. By the mid-80s, The Legendary Pink Dots had signed to Torso Records, who offered to pay Stapleton £3000 worth of recording costs up front – a huge advance for the time. Still, the pressures of delivering music according to a contract complicated the process. "Every three or four weeks they'd send a representative over to listen to what I had done so far," he relates. "*Spiral Insana* was... a sprawling mess until I put it together and edited it into what I wanted it to be. So if you play someone a bit of it and they were trying to assimilate it, they couldn't do it. It was a fucking mess. So they were really disappointed with me. When I finally finished it I was really chuffed. I liked it a lot but I don't think they liked it very much."

By this time Stapleton had become involved with Diana Rogerson, aka Crystal Belle Scrodd, previously a member of the performance art group Fistfuck, who some witnesses described as a female equivalent of Whitehouse. Rogerson encouraged Stapleton to give up his job and try to make a living from his music. The pair signed up for the government's back to work scheme and started their own 'above board' label, Idle Hole. The imprint's first release was 1989's gorgeous triple EP set called *Soliloquy For Lilith*. Named after Stapleton and Rogerson's first child, *Soliloquy...* remains Stapleton's most consistently rewarding work. Its defining soundworld evolved out a series of serendipitous accidents, engineered by Stapleton fooling around with a rack of FX pedals. When they were linked, the pedals generated an unearthly hum which he discovered he could alter by moving his hands above them. It was almost like playing a theremin. "There was no music actually going into it, it's creating its own music," Stapleton marvels. "As it cycles, it creates a loop which slowly becomes rhythmic, mantra-like and perfectly controlled by your fingers six inches above it. Wonderful! It's always changing; it's never the same. That record is fucking amazing." For the accompanying booklet drawings, he fantasised a series of deep sea organisms, which corresponded perfectly with the music's slow, primordial depths. The medieval choral music conjured by its quietest moments sounded like they had been directly tapped from the visions of Hildegard Of Bingen broadcast over ancient electricity circuits. As one of Nurse With Wound's biggest selling albums to date, it funded the relocation of the Stapleton-Rogerson family

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY STEVE STAPLETON

ABOVE: STEVE STAPLETON PAINTING THE SLEEVE CREDITS OF *SANTOOR LENA*, 2000. BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT: STAPLETON AND DIANA ROGERSON (AKA CRYSTAL BELLE SCROOD) IN NORTH LONDON, 1986, NURSE WITH WOUND'S FIRST LINE-UP (STAPLETON, JOHN FOTHERGILL, HEMAN PATHAK) IN 1979, RARE SIGHTING OF STAPLETON WITH INSTRUMENT, 1979-80



to County Clare, Ireland in 1989. Since then, he has been constantly at work, rebuilding their rundown farmhouse in Cooloorta as one of his greatest artworks. For Stapleton, the move was also an opportunity to take few years off from music to bring up his family. But by the early 90s he back making records as prolifically as before.

One night, Steven Stapleton had a dream where he was handed a copy of the new Nurse With Wound album bearing the title *Thunder Perfect Mind*. The trouble is, Current 93's David Tibet had already decided to name his new album after the medieval Gnostic text *The Thunder. Perfect Mind*. Not only did they readily agree to share the title, they also put the albums out as sister records. Released in 1992, Nurse's *Thunder Perfect Mind* was also the first record that Nurse With Wound recorded with engineer Colin Potter at his ICR studio in York. Potter has since become a key floating member, further reifying Stapleton's abstractions. Reprising Stapleton's fascination with machine rhythms, *Thunder Perfect Mind* is a kind of 'Industrial pastiche' that utilises huge monolithic blocks of cleaving electronics for two frigid soundpieces, "Cold" and "Colder Still".

STEVEN STAPLETON & TONY WAKEFORD
REVENGE OF THE SELFISH SHELLFISH
TURSA 004 CD 1992

NURSE WITH WOUND
THE SWINGING REFLECTIVE
UNITED DAIRIES UD069 2XCD 1999

Despite his essentially solitary nature, Stapleton thrives on collaboration. Virtually all his albums have been enlivened by the contributions of friends and family. His duo album with Tony Wakeford, of apocalyptic folk group Death In June and Sol Invictus, is one of his most accessible recordings. Held together by Wakeford's hypnotic guitar parts, the songs are soaked in a choral half light. Stapleton's intention was to get Wakeford to partake in a totally stupid project, in contrast to his own often po-faced work. Transposing his face onto the body of a green mollusc for the cover shot undoubtedly did the trick.

The Swinging Reflective is a double CD set that mops up Stapleton's pick of collaborations from 1980 through to 1999, highlighted by his carjacking of Stereolab on "Simple Headphone Mind", where all of that group's latent motorik tendencies are rendered beautifully overt in Stapleton's production. Its totally irresistible groove is the closest Stapleton is ever likely to get to the phrase 'dancefloor friendliness'. "Duelling Banjos", with William Bennett, is mutant hillbilly electronica, with its oscillating tones underscoring Stapleton's sense-destroying cut-ups of American talk radio. Stapleton's reworking of Coil's "ritual music for the accumulation of male sexual energy", ' How To Destroy Angels", reduces the original's gong tones to an androgynous mush.

ROCK 'N' ROLL STATION
UNITED DAIRIES UD039 CD 1994

FUNERAL MUSIC FOR PEREZ PRADO
UNITED DAIRIES UD098 CD 2001

1994's *Rock 'N' Roll Station* was a completely fresh departure, where Stapleton manifest the newfound interest in rhythm, which he had acquired through his immersion in the work of Cuban-American pianist and bandleader Perez Prado. Though there's scarcely a Latin rhythm in sight, *Rock 'N' Roll Station* is bolstered by minimal, repetitive electronica that also gives the nod to the sci-fi sound of Joe Meek's cartoon futures. The title track is a fairly faithful reworking of a track by Jac Berrocal that first appeared on the *Parallèles* album mentioned earlier. On the original, the lead vocal was taken by forgotten king of rock 'n' roll Vince Taylor, the man on whom David Bowie reputedly based the character of Ziggy Stardust. Over the metronomic thump of a cheap drum machine and some deep electro bass, Stapleton speaks a monologue that conflates disparate times and places with snatches of misremembered facts and verbal ellipsis. *"A rock 'n' roll session is a session where we can do what we want to do,"* Stapleton deadpans. It simultaneously works as a deconstruction and a celebration of the liberating rock 'n' roll urge. The album also touches down on some darker places, like "Finsbury Park, May 8th, 1:35pm (I'll See You In Another World)", which imagines the haunted mental state of the Progressive blues musician and occultist Graham Bond at the moment he fatally threw himself under a train in North London. Stapleton creates a maze of echoed sounds, where the screech of Tube trains and the crackle of tannoy systems are slowed into a series of frozen second by second snapshots, which unfurl with sluggish, inexorable fury.

Funeral Music For Perez Prado collects the deleted EPs *Yagga Blues* (1995) and *Soresucker* (1990), which consist mostly of Stapleton's more rhythmic experiments. But the full length version of the title track justifies its price tag. This transfixing elegy for Prado harks back to the floating tones of *Soliloquy For Lilith*, with Stapleton treating him to the kind of posthumous apocryphal reinvention that was previously the exclusive preserve of ghosts like Buddy Bolden or Charley Patton.

AN AWKWARD PAUSE
UNITED DAIRIES UD056 CD 1999

A MISSING SENSE
UNITED DAIRIES UD042 CD 1997

Stapleton has often spoken of a power trio record he once made in the style of German free rock outfit Guru Guru. Now any notions of releasing it have been effectively shelved – Stapleton insists it is an "after I'm dead" release – *An Awkward Pause* is the closest anyone is likely to get to hearing Stapleton in free-rocking mode. Including extracts of live jamming from the original sessions, courtesy of the Irish experimental rock group The Inflatable Sideshow, tracks like "Two Shaves And A Shine" are disarmingly funky. Here Nurse sound like a slightly less cosmic Funkadelic with a looping bass riff scissored into 93 sections, over which guitarist Peat Bog lets sparks fly. David Tibet is hilariously hysterical on vocals, erupting with surreal couplets like *"And block out the sound of chicken's wails, defeathering them on beds of nails"*. By way of contrast, the closing "Mummer's Little Weeper" is one of Stapleton's most beautiful compositions: a heavenly slice of euphoric acid rock that sounds like the comedown of one of Timothy Leary's Cosmic Couriers jams.

A much more hermetic affair, *A Missing Sense* could be Stapleton's most disturbing and troubling work. Originally conceived as a private tape to accompany his experiments with LSD, it was modelled on the American composer Robert Ashley's *Automatic Writing*, an experiment with recording and mutating involuntary speech that still sounds eerily beautiful today. Ashley's recording used to be the only music Stapleton could listen to while tripping without feeling claustrophobic. By way of giving thanks, he set out to make his own version, incorporating the sounds of his rural surroundings in Ireland. Designed to be played back at a semi-audible level, it's nevertheless a frighteningly powerful piece that uncannily takes over whatever space it is playing in. Stapleton talks of how Ashley's *Automatic Writing* blended perfectly with "the breathing of the building", when he played it late at night. *A Missing Sense* has that same ability, as the crackle of fire and the creak of wood combine with its incessant murmuring. *A Missing Sense* was originally released in 1986 as a split LP with Organum, but the CD reissue's extra tracks now include the similarly harrowing "Swansong", a vocal piece "spewed out" by Stapleton after seeing a documentary about the American atomic bomb tests on Bikini Atoll, which left him "sad, helpless and fucking angry". Here, the voices are so mangled they congeal in huge grotesque balls of air-raid static, combining in a great wail that's comparable to the livid power of Penderecki's *Threnody For The Victims Of Hiroshima*.

STEVEN STAPLETON & DAVID TIBET
THE SADNESS OF THINGS
UNITED DAIRIES UD037 CD 1991

CURRENT 93/NURSE WITH WOUND
BRIGHT YELLOW MOON
UNITED DURTRO UDDR8 CD 2001

Current 93's David Tibet has been Stapleton's closest friend and collaborator since they first met in 1982. Stapleton's fingerprints are all over Current 93's back catalogue, from the roar of early apocalyptic tape pieces like *Nature Unveiled* and *Dog's Blood Rising* through the nightmarish landscapes of recent soundworks like *In A Foreign Land, In A Foreign Town* and *I Have A Special Plan For This World. The Sadness Of Things* was recorded in 1991 in Cooloorta. Its mood is more heavily melancholy than most Nurse With Wound recordings, with Tibet dropping lines such as *"What colours do they dance in/The torn banners of yesterday?"* while a drum machine moves it relentlessly forward. Also included on *The Sadness Of Things* is "The Grave And Beautiful Name Of Sadness", a collaboration between Stapleton and longtime associate Geoff Cox (whose calligraphy often adorns Current 93 sleeves). It was originally recorded as a film soundtrack to Diana Rogerson's notoriously harrowing study of masochism, *Twisting The Black Strings Of My Mental Marionettes*. Stapleton long ago destroyed the prints for the film, claiming he was unable to have it in his house any more. But the music fits perfectly with "The Sadness Of Things", another long tone piece that moves from celestial breath to churning, gnarled electronics.

Characterised by Current guitarist Michael Cashmore's acoustic fingerpicking, *Bright Yellow Moon* was billed as a split album between Current 93 and Nurse With Wound. Tibet conceived the piece during a period in hospital, when his condition brought on a series of near-death visions. tiny black helicopters littered the air of the ward awaiting the terrible descent of the Angel of Death Samael through the ceiling. Stapleton illustrates Tibet's fevered confusion with the burr of miniature blades scything the air over the slow pulse of life-support machines and leather lungs. Some parts evoke the eerie fog of Current 93 titles like *In Menstrual Night*, where Stapleton once again abetted Tibet with his recreations of the cold echoes and artificial rhythms of a hospital ward. But this one is heavier on more traditional instrumentation. Indeed, acoustic tracks like "Walking Like Shadow" wouldn't be out of place on a Current 93 album. Still, Stapleton cites "Die, Flip Or Go To India", a dark, sonorous evocation of some of Tibet's most harrowing sickbed experiences, as one of his favourite tracks. It has already got him talking about composing a sister Nurse With Wound album around the same title, excited about the possibilities he sees for this music once he gets back to working on it in a lonely place. □ *Nurse With Wound discography and info. www.brainwashed.com/nww. David Keenan's book* England's Hidden Reverse. A Secret History Of The Esoteric Undergound *will be published next year by SAF Publishing*

THE HERMIT: STAPLETON IN 1984 (ABOVE) AND 1990 (BELOW)

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Turntable heaven: Philip Jeck's gear (see page 28)

PHOTO MATTIAS EK

Nurse With Wound 15

Fritz Muller
"Traum" from Fritz Müller Rock (Roth Handle)
Sir Julian
"Caravan" from The 13 Fingers Of Sir Julian (RCA)
Funki Porcini
"Surge" from Let's See What Carmen Can Do (Ninja Tune)
Cromegnon
"Caledonia" from Orgasm (ESP)
Derek Bailey
"Ninj (de mix)" from Guitar Drums And Bass (Avant)
Supersister
"The Groupies Of The Band" from Super Starshine (Polydor)
The Monks
"Oh How To Do Now" from Black Monk Time (Polydor)
Can
"Uphill" from Delay (Spoon)
The Residents
King Kong (unreleased)
The Three Suns
"Fever" from Fever And Smoke (RCA Victor)
Dzyan
"Kabisrain" from Time Machine (Bacillus)
Pérez Prado
"Monitor Mambo" (7" Single)
Anye Gebarek
"Big Mouth" from Smiling And Waving (Virgin)
Electric Sandwich
"China" from Electric Sandwich (Brain)
Dr John
"Walk On Gilded Splinters" from Gris Gris (Alligator)

Compiled by Steven Stapleton, Nurse With Wound

Sähkö 15

Vincent Floyd
Get Up (Dance Mania)
Cornelis Vreeswijk
Rio Janeiro (Metronome)
World 2 World
Jupiter Jazz (UR)
Jepan
Adolescent Sex (Fame/EMI)
Audiotech
Techno City 95 (Metroplex)
The Children
Freedom (DJ International)
Delta House Of Funk
No Pressure (Go Beat)
Iseec Speyes
The Shift EP (Snickers)
Arcane Device
Engines Of Myth (ReR)
Envelop
Hear My Answer (I Records)
Coo Coo Cal
How Does It Feel Ya (Tommy Boy)
Throbbing Gristle
20 Jazz Funk Greats (Industrial)
Marden Hill
Bardot (Mo Making)
Stanley Clarke
Journey To Love (Atlantic)
Secret Service
Flash In The Night (Attic)

Compiled by Tommi Grönlund, Sähkö Recordings Finland

Sound Design 15

Fritz Lang/Adolf Jensen
M (1931)
Orson Welles/James G Stewart
Citizen Kane (1941)
Alfred Hitchcock/Oskar Sala
The Birds (1963)
Jacques Tati/Jacques Meumont
Playtime (1967)
Sergio Leone/Fausto Ancilli
Once Upon A Time In The West (1969)
William Friedkin/Fred Brown
The Exorcist (1973)
Andrei Tarkovsky/Vladimir Sharun
The Mirror (1975)
George Lucas/Ben Burtt
Star Wars (1977)
David Lynch/Alan Splet
Eraserhead (1977)
Francis Ford Coppola/Walter Murch
Apocalypse Now (1979)
Martin Scorsese/Frank Warner
Raging Bull (1980)
Wolfgang Petersen/Wylie Statemen
Das Boot (1981)
Francis Ford Coppola/Richard Beggs
Rumble Fish (1983)
David Fincher/Ren Klyce
Seven (1995)
Steven Spielberg/Gary Rydstrom
Saving Private Ryan (1998)

Compiled by Peter Albrechtsen Danish sound designer (pal@sb.dk)

The Office Ambience

DJ/Rupture
Minesweeper Suite (Tigerbeat6)
Peter Brötzmann Trio
For Adolphe Sax (Atavistic)
The Fille Qui Mousse
Se Faire Pour Une Femme Trop Belle (Fractal)
The Gossip
Arkansas Heat (Kill Rock Stars)
Various
Brain In The Wire 3XCD (Brainwashed)
William Parker Quartet
Raining On The Moon (Thirsty Ear)
John Parish
How Animals Move (Thrill Jockey)
Henry Flynt
Raga Electric (Locust)
Jackie O Motherfucker/Vibrecathedral Orchestra
(Textile)
Butthole Surfers
Humpty Dumpty LSD (Latino Bugger Vol)
QPSM Unit
The Seriousness Of The Matter (Quadraphonic)
Soft Machine
Facelift (Voiceprint)
Various
An Anthology Of Noise And Electronic Music (Sub Rosa)
Numbers
Numbers Life (Tigerbeat6)
Harald Sack Ziegler
Kopf Zahl Bauch (Staubgold)

Compiled by *The Wire* Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, readers, etc. Email charts@thewire.co.uk

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By Brendan Mullen with Don Bolles & Adam Parfrey
Bill Evans: Everything Happens To Me: A Musical Biography By Keith Shadwick
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Turntable Hell
London, UK
Cinematic Orchestra
London, UK
Eletronika Festival
Belo Horizonte, Brazil
Bang On A Can with Cecil Taylor
London, UK
Adventures
New York, USA
Tikiman & Scion
San Francisco, USA

Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, albums and singles

ALVA NOTO/KOMET/ BYETONE/SIGNAL
MORT AUX VACHES
STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER 2XCD

OREN AMBARCHI
MORT AUX VACHES
STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER CD

MASSIMO
MORT AUX VACHES
STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Here are three new additions to Staalplaat's Mort Aux Vaches series, which issues material commissioned and broadcast in Holland by VPRO radio. They may share the series title – *Mort Aux Vaches* (*Death To The Cows* – sacred, presumably), but they're all very different. Alva Noto (aka Carsten Nicolai), Komet (aka Frank Bretschneider), Byetone (aka Olaf Bender) and Signal (comprised of the Nicolai, Bretschneider and Bender team who run Raster-Noton) each contribute some 30-40 minutes apiece to their two CD set. A factor common to all four units is the art of segue, where episodic parts are dovetailed and finessed to create a smooth unfolding of musical events. But contrast also occurs, of a kind impossible to achieve on traditional instruments. Alva Noto's "Prototypes" includes several abrupt and startling transitions. The most notable happens around the 20 minute mark, when it shifts from dancing clicks to a pulsing bass figure, midrange microwave crackles and high sonar blips. The material is minimal and repetitive, although almost every repetition is nuanced to introduce variety. The old complaint about electronics producing sound less interesting to the ear than acoustically played music no longer applies.

Unless, that is, you *wish* it to apply, as Byetone obviously does. His five track sequence of stark oscillator glissandos, low hisses and electronic pulsations is as minimal and repetitive as late works by Morton Feldman. But whereas Feldman shuffled rhythms and textures to retain the listener's interest and subvert expectations, Byetone relies on John Cage's Zen dictum that something boring repeated indefinitely will eventually sound interesting. If only Komet's and Signal's contributions are much more imaginative and interesting. Although Signal's art gallery Techno has a slightly more improvisational feel, the pacing and spare textural play here are extremely well judged. Komet's austere electronics and light dubby textures incorporate modulations of the audience's applause into the final minute or two of "Square", and the synthetically smooth surfaces of "Glas" and "Wurm" are penetrated by split second bursts of interference, like leakage from a parallel universe.

Oren Ambarchi's CD is subtitled *Song Of Separation*. That is, the separation between the notes plucked on his electric guitar. What begins as fairly delicate pointillism is modified by the overlapping of tones and the introduction of loops. As it progresses through its first five stages, it effects a glitchy restructuring of its musical parameters, leading in the sixth stage to the thick drone of information overload. Ambarchi investigated the same concept on his recent Touch CD *Suspension*; a forthcoming vinyl release, *Triste*, will take it further. Although his notes appear random, to conclude that *Song Of Separation* is an indeterminate music is to miss the point. Though context-bound, indeterminate sounds are unglued, whereas *Separation* is about the greater application of glue. Indeed, its final section is almost nothing but glue.

Although the riffs on Massimo's CD of brutalist sonics are generated within his computer, what they most recall is the amphetamine driven, cranked up guitars of punk impetuosity. High on volume, low on sensitivity and driven to distraction, the music rackets around like a crazed pinball machine, and Massimo (or Massimiliano Sapienza, in full) revels in hideously joyful noise. It's brattish fun. Whether it will wear well is another matter. Massimo may demolish the boundaries between sound and noise, but the sound of their demolition isn't necessarily musical.

ALMÁ FURY/OTANI/OTOMO/ CHARLES
HIGH TONES FOR THE WINTER FASHION
TEXTILE T1 CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

With its catchy title and naive, manga-like graphics, this is an accessible overview of Franco-Japanese electronic improv. For one, it avoids the drone fatigue that all too often dogs the genre: none of its eight tracks overstays its welcome, and, with the exception of the third, they average out at just three and a half minutes each. The two openers feature Almá Fury, aka Vonick Moccoli and Claude Besnard, a sampler/Moog duo from Tours. "Densités" reveals a concern for pitch that is rare in this kind of music, while "Plus De Lumières" playfully hints at an unstated backbeat. The third track, "Live", is a 1999 recording of a fast moving, inventive and texturally uncluttered 21 minute performance in Bourges by Almá Fury, Yasuhiro Otani on Powerbook and Otomo Yoshihide on turntables and effects. The remaining five tracks feature Xavier Charles on radios, electronics and, on "X For O N°1" and "N°2", his trademark 'vibrating surfaces'. These latter are upturned loudspeakers playing stable drones, into which he throws small metal objects, grains of rice, ping pong balls, etc. The results are amplified and mixed into a pulsing, stochastic sound web worthy of Xenakis. Otomo returns to the fray on track six but is content to drift in a rumbling dronescape, gently tweaking backwards samples into life. Charles's two closing "Radio Brabant" tracks flit across the airwaves, tossing snatches of news broadcasts and Heavy Metal into a grainy electronic soup.

LAURIE ANDERSON
LIVE IN NEW YORK
NONESUCH 79681 2XCD

BY ELISABETH VINCENTELLI

For better or for worse, this set's impact – at least its emotional impact – is inextricably linked to the events of 11 September. That it was recorded live a week after the destruction of the World Trade Centre may well have forever altered the perception of several Anderson songs, including her now classic hit "O Superman". You can almost feel the audience seize up when she coolly enunciates, *"Here come the planes/ They're American planes/Made in America."* By a twist of fate much more horrific than those usually documented in her work, Anderson's position as seer of the American art bohemian establishment had suddenly been revived.

The mere act of writing this will no doubt be deemed irremediably cynical by some, but the collision between world events and the New York concert calendar has given this set a lot more weight than it would have had otherwise. Laurie Anderson's relevance has skidded dramatically over the past decade, as the interaction between life, art and technology she used to explore so cannily has evolved in ways that left her somewhat dumbfounded. *Songs And Stories From Moby-Dick* may well have been her nadir, an embarrassing debacle marred by unbearable smugness. If last year's studio release, *Life On A String*, showed that she was dimly aware of having painted herself in a corner, her solution – going for a more intimate, 'naturalistic' feel – revealed severe musical limitations.

Unfortunately, these are in stark evidence on this recording, which may do better as a stand-up rather than a music album. "Wildebeests" features inane New Age doodlings, "Coolsville" and "Strange Angels" have almost completely lost their initial spooky, David Lynch-like quality, and the limp funk of "Poison" makes Jamiroquai sound downright avant – this from a woman who worked with Nile Rodgers back in 1984. The soliloquies fare slightly better, simply because Anderson's timing as a comedian is near impeccable. Having almost completely dropped vocal processing (her simulated masculine "voice of authority", for instance, is absent), she goes full hog for a mix of wide eyed detachment and dry humour. But she wants to have her cake and eat it too, using that coolness to deliver rather sentimental material too often marred by the nagging suspicion that she thinks she's smarter than us.

In a *New York Times* portrait last year, Anderson referred to a brief stint working at a McDonald's in Chinatown when she described herself as a "cultural spy". Well, her attempt to boldly go where no bobo has gone before might be commendable, but *Live In New York*'s navel-gazing does not tap into the empathy and will to experiment necessary to good art. Indeed, the album merely conjures an image of Anderson as New York's answer to the middle-aged English women found wandering around Italian churches in novels by Henry James or EM Forster. At home, Laurie Anderson will always be a tourist.

BARON/SHARP/ZORZI
BEYOND
AUDITORIUM 80 30037004018 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

This album breaks down into three distinct phases. Firstly, there is Elliott Sharp's familiar guitar pyrotechnics and general rock inflected wailing. Then there's the loop based soundscape artist, and finally the avant sax skronker. Sharp's co-conspirators are Joey Baron on the worryingly credited "beats and rhythms" and Zorzi on "guitar strumming", dobro, electric bass and loops. In guitar pyrotechnic mode, Sharp proves to be the least interesting element in this company. Revisiting old ground, overturning familiar stones and turning up nothing new, these pieces would not be out of place on Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*. For the most part it doesn't really engage drummer Baron's finer critical acumen either, the odd cymbal thrash notwithstanding. And, without backup, Zorzi doesn't appear to be the kind of guy to push on alone.

The more interesting work begins when Sharp switches to soprano sax, Baron lays on very rudimentary brushwork, and Zorzi adds minimal slide and dobro effects. Though short and obviously not intended as the set's main focus, the way this instrumental configuration of the trio combines an unfettered, rustic texture with a zany, throwaway attitude is far more engrossing.

The central piece of the album, however, is the 16 minute "Kursk", named after the doomed Russian submarine pictured on on the cover. The first half of the improvisation emphasises collective electronic mood building, with brooding subterranean surges stirring the murky, sonar filled depths. As the mood builds, the piece comes alive, with Baron suddenly interjecting genuinely portentous tom-tom rolls, and Sharp smearing frenetic slurs of guitar noise over the assembled wash. But, for all its length, it feels like too little too late, an opportunity missed. Sharp is usually the height of eloquence, but *Beyond* finds him surprisingly tongue tied on guitar yet curiously more alert to the possibilities inherent in his soprano playing.

BUTTHOLE SURFERS
HUMPTY DUMPTY LSD
LATINO BUGGER VEIL/CARGO LBV07 CD

BY BLEDDYN BUTCHER

What's in a name? Everything and nothing at all. Names are elementary, a convenient means of distinguishing whatchamacallit from thingummyjig. Whether their method is opaque or definitive, earnest or sly, the net effect is the same: they confer identity. No group operating under the unbeatable aegis 'Butthole Surfers' ever anticipated gaining universal acclaim. Their straight-baiting label practically ensures that they would only ever appeal to a minority. And so, Beavis & Butthead's patronage notwithstanding, it has proved.

Humpty Dumpty LSD is a collection of the Texan group's outtakes and oddities, drawn from all parts of their eccentric career and arranged without discernible self-regard. This is commendable: a pedantic apparatus would give the lie to their feckless method. In any case, their music is pretty much all of a piece, a dissolute amalgam of riff-driven nonsense, stoner humour and distorted noise. Basses rumble, guitars bleat like geese, drums pound: the juggernaut lumbers on. It is, if anything, the sound of epic underachievement, installing half-assed attitude in the place of cultural critique. Like the prattle of teenagers gathered around a righteous bong, it can be amusing when overheard. Unfortunately, paying closer attention reduces the dividends. Beneath the gleefully

Shadowboxing with free music champions Matthew Shipp and William Parker, DJ Spooky sets out to answer the question: what is jazz? By Hua Hsu

DJ SPOOKY
OPTOMETRY
THIRSTY EAR THI571212 CD

The purpose of Thirsty Ear's Blue Series is to suggest answers to the question of what jazz *is*. The results have been remarkable and compelling. Anchored by avant jazz mainstays such as pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist William Parker, and incorporating input from 'outsiders' like Spring Heel Jack and FLAM, the Blue Series has pursued its agenda through startling juxtapositions. Musicians known for their free music associations shadow taut, machine rhythms, while drum programmers and beat makers experiment with abstract patterns and open-ended structures. The question of jazz is important because so much music today seems to envy its traditions and freedoms. Mongrel musics like drum 'n' bass, HipHop, 'Broken Beats' have been portrayed as the 'new/nu jazz'; sampling and turntablism have created perverted, virtual worlds built on jazz's seductive surface textures rather than its formal aesthetic. Though this releaase from DJ Spooky isn't officially part of the series, it aspires towards the same truths while offering fascinating possibilities by posing the question differently: *Is it still jazz if I rearrange it this way?*

Optometry attacks the question of jazz from the angle Spooky understands best – sampling and found sounds – and invites a host of Blue Series regulars to help him answer it. Ambitious references in the sleevenotes to Dostoyevsky, Duchamp and Charley Patton aside, *Optometry* is a success in terms of both sound and vision – that is, the sound of collaborators Shipp, Parker, saxophonist Joe McPhee and drummer Guillermo Brown, and the vision of Spooky.

Optometry comes across like a more evolved take on Shipp's recent quintet album *Nu Bop*. With Spooky plucking his collaborators from their more familiar Improv or free jazz surroundings, the most striking thing is how structured and organised the playing initially sounds; how restrained and clean Shipp sounds; how *funky* Brown becomes under Spooky's guidance. On the first two tracks, "Ibid, Desmarches, Ibid" and "Reactive Switching Strategies For The Control Of Uninhabited Air", the rhythms and grooves feel stiff and hackneyed. Only old man McPhee's shaky, wobbling sax blows against the grain, pursuing an internal logic, one that resists predictability and prettiness.

Perhaps it's the addition of Daniel Bernard Roumain's scythe-like violin, but things start improving radically on the third track, the meditative and draggy "Variation Cybernetique: Rhythmic Pataphysic". The 11 minute title track "Optometry" is a summation of the entire project, all groovy and sunny one moment, stridently improvised and murky the next. The recurring "Absentia" tracks – prefixed as "Sequentia", "Dementia" and "Absentia" – are gorgeous, moody and spacious, helped along by Spooky's production effects and ragged kalimba.

Though the album starts with ensemble grooves, it quickly switches to looser, more fragmented pieces like the delicate "Rosemary" or the single-mood "Absentia" ruminations. Brown's galloping, hand-tailored rhythms shadowbox with the artificial 'beats' of Billy Martin (of Medeski, Martin & Wood), and elsewhere Brown's distinctive patterns are themselves chopped or looped. While Spooky's production and arrangements establish an overall aesthetic that values backbone and spacing, the players themselves are left to wander and feel out the music within those spaces. Spooky suggests he put the record together from his "fellow musicians' elements". Yet he doesn't go on to explain exactly what that means. So, is the entire album a reconstruction of samples, or is it a live, real time collaboration (as with *Masses*, last year's Blue Series release which paired Spring Heel Jack with a similar roll-call of improvisors to the one Spooky has assembled here)? Is the music a trickster's act of illusion that confuses process and 'reality'? Perhaps the album's title offers a clue (and Spooky has titled the album carefully): optometry is the practice of examining, measuring and correcting one's vision. "It's a new way of thinking about something that's in all of our lives every day,' he writes. 'Patterns, codes, ciphers – whatever angle you look at it from, it's all about speaking with the invisible and letting the conversation become total media, total text.' While sampling continues to confuse 'real' drum tracks with machine loops, and 'real' visions with virtual ones, Spooky looks elsewhere for originality. Instead, his new ways of seeing and processing the world are bound up in dialectical struggle and subterfuge: in maintaining an unstable relationship with the listener that echoes Duke Ellington's question, "Who is playing in the shadow of whom?"

You can't help but feel as though there's some riddle to be pieced together here. But in the end, it doesn't really matter. The process is purposely kept distant and obscure, the line between improvisation and studio manipulation is blurred, and the result is a suggestive, intriguing and ultimately confounding response to the original question that offers jazz as both process and outcome. *What is jazz?* The sound and structure of what came before and the curious shapelessness of things to come. And, as poet Carl Hancock Rux intones on "Asphalt (Tome II)", *"I like it, daddy."*

THE PETER BRÖTZMANN TRIO
FOR ADOLPHE SAX
ATAVISTIC UMS/ALP230 CD

In dedicating his first LP to the Belgian inventor of the saxophone, Adolphe Sax (1814-94), Peter Brötzmann was making a point. At first considered a novelty instrument – one that Sax imagined being played as a family, like recorders or the later stylophone – the saxophone initially became a serious instrument in the hands of Coleman Hawkins. Since then, its development and mystique has been entirely associated with American jazz. In 1967, by reminding listeners that its inventor was European, Brötzmann was staking his own claim to the instrument. This reissue includes some telling photographs by Roberto Masotti showing Brötzmann and Peter Kowald, the bassist on *For Adolphe Sax*, playing to an intense gathering in a German art gallery. The young audience stare at the musicians with all the focus, puzzlement and agony usually directed at art. Brötzmann started out as a painter (the cover here has the blunt yet stylish impact of all his visual designs). He cordially hated the gallery system, and found music more congenial to his idea of art as event rather than product. Nevertheless, this background is important. Unlike the swing and bebop saxophonists, Brötzmann did not spring from the entertainment industry.

The old debate about the relative merits of American free jazz and European free improvisation easily leads critics into assertions that trample over the aural evidence. *The Penguin Guide To Jazz*, for example, insists that Brötzmann "arrived at his methods independently of Albert Ayler". The fact is, it's inconceivable that The Brötzmann Trio could have played what they did without Ayler's example. In 1967, without American free jazz and the associated struggle for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, these climactic, bursting sounds would have had none of the revolutionary and erotic associations required to make them meaningful. Of course, if music is shorn of its politics and reduced to a formal matter of innovation and copyright, admitting such an 'influence' would harm Brötzmann's reputation. However, that a German classics graduate and artist should hear Ayler and reinvent himself as a saxophone terrorist is incredibly inspiring. It proves that the 60s 'jazz revolution' was not a parochial American affair, but an international phenomenon.

The art world Brötzmann emerged from was wrestling with the significance of accident, expressionist fracture of traditional form, and existential testing of limits. He may have used Ayler as licence and an 'open sesame', but he did not produce a simulacrum or pastiche (perhaps this is what *The Penguin Guide* means). The opening here, as Brötzmann plays an impossibly high note until it starts to break up, is comparable to the aesthetic of Danish painter Asger Jorn's comparative vandalism. Yet Brötzmann is simply too musical not to allow his line to bubble with references to swing and bop. The restlessness of his tumbled notes is reminiscent of Ayler, but then the latter achieved his style by distilling the urgency and sense of crisis of bebop ('Now's The Time'). Ayler may have showed the way, but Brötzmann picked up on something necessary and objective. He concertinas an astonishing amount of music into his opening 'howl', making it completely different from mere noise, which, deprived of volume, tends to be static and quiescent. This has the aggressiveness of the orator bursting to communicate.

Albert Ayler's New Thing was a less mediated and sophisticated version of Charles Mingus: both challenged the progressive objectification of jazz by importing some of the rousing turmoil of gospel. Wisely, Brötzmann does not try and replicate these roots. Compared to the Ayler/Peacock/Murray trio which launched these kinds of freedom on the world by recording *Spiritual Unity* for ESP in 1964, Brötzmann/Kowald/Johansson are less expansive and three-dimensional. They unite on a tight, 16 beats to the bar frenzy rather than the swaying, overlapping rhythms of Mingus and Ayler: there is a sleekness and streamlined attack to the music that is foreign to free jazz. Kowald's superfast bowing on the high notes unites with Brötzmann's batsqueaks to produce that squirling, ear-rinsing extremity which remains all the rage in laptop improv. Towards the end of the 19 minute title track (a devastating marathon by 1967 standards, occupying as it did the whole first side of the LP), drummer Sven-Åke Johansson uses his snare, toms and bass drum as tuned percussion, sounding like someone crashing about on piano. In common with the British improvisors, the musicians are broadening the palette of each instrument so that improvisations become truly collective events, subverting and redistributing their traditional roles.

On "Sanity", a more spacious and open piece, Kowald appears to be attempting to outwit his own harmonic choices by abrupt attacks on his strings. Again, this relates to strategies which engulfed the art world after the surrealist discovery of drip painting: accident as the moment which trips repressive consciousness and suggests new avenues of exploration. When Kowald and Brötzmann fuse their high harmonics, their spuming logic recalls fireworks, fountains and waterfalls. Although this kind of music can terrify conventional listeners – and what terrifies is usually termed 'ugly' – it actually taps the beauty of natural processes. However, there is no contemplative passivity or Zen surrender. Johansson's drums keep up a driving, linear energy which Kowald manages to relate to at the same time.

For this CD reissue, a nine minute performance by the trio with pianist Fred Van Hove from September 1967 at Radio Bremen has been added. Van Hove plays magnificently, and after the hurtling sound of the trio, the sudden glitter of cascading piano notes is refreshing. Since this record was made, these extended techniques and extremities have become part of the lexicon. Hearing them in their purity – the moment when sheer invention was the only justification required – gives them an aura of unattainable logic: the status of a classic. However, there is something greedy and unstoppable about Brötzmann's playing that refuses relegation to classic status and its concept of timeless beauty. Maybe that flaw is the deep politics of Brötzmann's art.

Drunk on Ayler's spiritual unity, the first blasts from Germany's fledgling Improv giant Peter Brötzmann reminded the world of the saxophone's European origins. By Ben Watson

Baby it's Kowald outside: Sven Åke Johansson, Peter Kowald and Peter Brötzmann in 1967

collaged grotesquene of the surface, there are no rolling emotional depths. Disaffection, these days, is a commonplace. Although it might seem strange to base a career on such a restricted palette, no one can say The Surfers — as no one calls them — didn't nail their colours to the mast. What's in a name? Who wants to know?

JOHN CAMERON
KES OST
TRUNK PROMO CD

BY MIA CLARKE

Composer John Cameron made his soundtrack debut with *Kes* — Ken Loach's hit film about one boy and his kestrel. Made in 1969, Cameron silently kept the master tapes concealed for more than 30 years, inexplicably delaying its soundtrack album release until now. Yet Cameron, who went on to become better known as a musician, arranger and conductor, says he has always been drawn back to the simple beauty of this early composition.

The film is about a brutalised, apathetic schoolboy, whose friendship with a bird of prey briefly alerts him to the possibility of a life beyond the dead-end mining town he has grown up in. Its theme is carried by a soaring flute, played by Harold McNair. The late jazz flautist not only appeared on records by such 1960s artists as John Martyn, Donovan and Ginger Baker, his playing is also preserved in the loop from which the Mellotron's flute sound is derived. Though he's best known as a jazz musician, *Kes* is the least jazz-like of his recordings and undoubtedly the most beautiful. He provides a fragile, ethereal quality to the music, which is also scored for clarinet, harp and drums.

With harps adding sorrowful depth, Cameron's score reveals the beauty and childlike innocence beneath the grimed surface of Loach's social realism. At barely 20 minutes, his soundtrack is as sparsely arranged as it is short and sweet, yet its subtle versatility brokers *Kes*'s moodshifts from gritty drama through broad comedy to understated, delicate charm.

ASA-CHANG & JUNRAY
JUN RAY SONG CHANG
LEAF BAY22 CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Percussionist Asa Chang led The Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra from 1989 onwards, and he has also earned his keep as a pop sessioneer. But the manic Eastern electro collage he makes in his own name is almost completely divorced from any stylistic precedent. With his group Junray, Asa-Chang's untutored approach to the cheap Indonesian dandud bongo contrasts with that of tabla maestro U-Zhaan. The line-up is completed by guitarist/programmer Hidehiko Urayama and mixmaster Kiyoshi Kusaka. This disc combines a Japanese mini-album from last year and a 1998 EP released by Cornelius.

One of Asa-Chang's favoured techniques is an exaggerated variation on the traditional tabla talk (bols). He splices skin strikes and vocal phrases into tight runs, which are subsequently electronically warped and layered with such clipped precision, they sound like they were cut on hard disk. If the group can perform this astounding feat in real time, they deserve triple the applause. Asa-Chang's voice, meanwhile, is heavily treated, causing his naive enunciations to tumble and accelerate in a hermaphrodite split.

The Junray sound is at once tranquil and agitated, anarchic and controlled, melodic yet fractured. The opening "Hana" has a lush string bed reminiscent of Nitin Sawhney's "Homelands", beneath the swooping sinewaves that crop up repeatedly through the album. "Preach" has a lurching street band feel, with Asa-Chang blowing hesitant trumpet against a metallophone racket, while jumbled spurts of tiny voices build into a dense forest. On "Ni Gatsu", heavily processed robochild phrases are haltingly paired with Urayama's bendy guitar figures. His emphatically stopped strums have quite a Beefheartian feel, delivering succulent melody in interrupted jags. "Jippun" develops some even more exaggerated cartoon tabla talk, while "Goo-Gung-Gung" has a dashing Korean gong feel, surrounded by flapping analogue sheets. Asa-Chang manages to pull off a feeling of extreme dislocation, albeit of a kind that, with practice, you can still whistle and clap along to.

ALICE COLTRANE
UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS
IMPULSE! AS9210 CD

BY DAVID TOOP

Evaluating Alice Coltrane without prejudice is problematic. Her relationship to John Coltrane, both as his widow and musical collaborator, is at the centre of the difficulty, if not the crux. Conservative jazz fans finds it easy to dismiss her: she orchestrates for string ensembles — always suspect, she plays organ and harp — instruments that lie at the outer edges of jazz orthodoxy, like Yoko Ono, she fulfils the role of the 'destroying wife' who supposedly emasculates a lost genius, then administrates his legend, she defines herself as a spiritual seeker with an enthusiasm that goes beyond the masculine reserve of other religious believers within jazz. Worst of all, she indulges in melodrama and sentimentality.

Most of these criticisms can be trashed right off without unwrapping them. Melodrama and sentimentality are less easy. Masculine sentimentality is commonplace in jazz ballads, a maudlin feeling of wounded withdrawal that passes for romanticism; it's hard to enjoy jazz without accepting this. Alice's sentimentality is more a mystical yearning for the new age. The feeling of being overwhelmed by a 'cloud of unknowing' is pivotal in her work. You either love it or loathe it. I'm not a religious person but find the oceanic, immersive force of her work thrilling. "This 'cosmic libido' or oceanic sensibility is intimately connected with écriture féminine," wrote Joy Press and Simon Reynolds in *The Sex Revolts*, "writing that privileges flux and fluidity."

So if men really are from Mars, women from Venus, where to place *Universal Consciousness* in the context of Alice's recorded output? *Universal Consciousness* is striking because musicality of extraordinary quality, both by Alice herself and by drummers Clifford Jarvis, Jack DeJohnette and Rashied Ali, and bassist Jimmy Garrison, lies beneath the psychotropic flux of its surface. Recorded in three days during 1971, the production, engineering and mixing of its six tracks are absolutely stunning. Rather than allowing all the contradictory elements to dissolve into mystical soup, Alice and producer/mixer Ed Michel maintained clear space for individual touch. This is particularly marked in the high and low registers: cymbals sizzle and ring, while bass tones really drive the rhythms. In one sense, this is an album of apocalyptic sound painting, yet most tracks resolve into modal blues grooves, equal in power to Jimmy Smith or Shirley Scott.

Universal Consciousness is free jazz in the sense that it continues the trajectory unleashed by John Coltrane — a turbulence of rhythms, rushing through the landscape like a twister — but that turbulence is aligned with a kind of free funk. Listen to the loose groove established during the second part of "Sita Ram", the speed chess game between Alice's organ bass pedals and Jimmy Garrison's double bass, the stuttering push and pull of Clifford Jarvis's brushwork and bells. This was a new way to play rhythms — and its resolution of the contradictions between stability and flux is a revelation.

The groove of "The Ankh Of Amen-Ra" is even stronger. Essentially this bluesy duet between Alice and Rashied Ali is an exercise in telepathy, the two players stretching the invisible cord that joins them to breaking point without losing their unity. If Alice's assertive bass pedals anticipate the low end of more recent records, other aspects of the album prefigure New Age music. Magisterial melodies abound, either played by Alice on organ or the string quartet of John Blair, Leroy Jenkins, Julius Brand and Joan Kalisch. The melodrama of its thematic statements has a clear origin in John Coltrane's unequivocal passion for an emotional tune, the still centre of chaos pursued (in some cases, to the point of redundancy) after his death by saxophonists like Pharoah Sanders, Carlos Ward and Gato Barbieri.

Perhaps the biggest influence at that moment, though, was Alice's journey to India. The fusion of sources alive and audible in her organ playing — church, bebop, free jazz and Indian ragas — add up to something truly unique, at times almost unidentifiable. *Universal Consciousness* is one of those albums that pushed deep into the unknown, then returned with riches that seemed impossible to evaluate. 30 years later, are we any the wiser?

CORYELL/SMITH/COSTER
CAUSE AND EFFECT
TONE CENTER TC40022 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

This CD first surfaced in America in 1999, but wider European distribution loudly trumpets Tone Center's mission statement over here: no holds barred, foot to the floor jazz fusion. Having ploughed the fusion furrow since its inception three decades ago, you couldn't find three better practitioners than Larry Coryell, Steve Smith and Tom Coster. They know its every twist and turn of dramatic phrasing and pregnant pause, and exploit them all on this release.

Guitarist Coryell's legendary Eleventh House recordings for Vanguard in the 70s frequently elicit comparisons with John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra (first incarnation). The present group, however, dispenses with any allusions to higher astral planes and goes straight for the groin. This is not a pejorative comment. Indeed, as John Scofield has commented about good jazz funk, jazz rock fusion is extremely hard to do well. These three players manifest commitment from the opening notes of "These Are Odd Times", as Coryell sets out his stall with a display of highly charged technical dexterity. He might have been

AMBIANCES MAGNÉTIQUES

diane labrosse martin tétreault parasites

jean derome canot-camping : expédition 4

lee pui ming who's playing

jean derome joane hétu nous perçons les oreilles la vie, c'est simple

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VARIOUS
AN ANTHOLOGY OF NOISE AND ELECTRONIC MUSIC: FIRST A-CHRONOLOGY VOLUME 1 1921-2001
SUB ROSA SR190 2XCD

"Every explanation of it is unconvincing," John Cage remarked in an interview conducted in 1979 immediately following the Jonestown mass suicide in Guyana. "It's as though it were poor fiction." Narrative often takes over where analysis proves inadequate. Connections are inevitably made even when they're not completely understood. Pointlessly cute concepts, such as the 'a-chronology' used to frame this collection of recordings, were an undoubted historical inevitability the moment Soviet film maker Eisenstein edited two unrelated frames of film together. Without them, all we'd be stuck here with is *Now That's What I Call Noise And Electronic Music Volume 1*. At least such a volume – the first of a threatened series – wouldn't be as intellectually muddled as this Sub Rosa selection. It would certainly be a lot easier to write about. Broken down to its most basic components, what you get here is all the biggest hits and the sexiest names spread over two CDs: Cage, Edgard Varèse, Nam June Paik, Iannis Xenakis, Pierre Schaeffer, John Cale, Sonic Youth, Einstürzende Neubauten, the list goes on... The overall feel is reminiscent of those tiresome pre-millennial lists of great artistic achievements. So, it's *Hello Again 20th Century* and come as you are to *All Yesterday's Parties*, where the fun just never stops.

Somewhere at the back of all this cosy nostalgia lies a deep sense of theoretical yearning: the feeling that, somehow, the great artistic pioneers occupied some privileged and unsullied moment in history. "Given that most new music today is electronic," curator Guy-Marc Hinant boldly states in the accompanying booklet, "the term 'electronic music' has lost its meaning." It's his intention, he says, to document "the first traces of a music that was necessarily revolutionary: electronic music, created ex nihilo – from nothing." This is history served up as extremely poor fiction. For the appellation 'electronic music' hasn't lost its meaning, but gained several new and conflicting ones. That it no longer fits neatly into some pre-existing theoretical timeline doesn't automatically drain the term of all substance. Similarly, electronic music didn't spring clean limbed and fully formed from anyone's forehead.

The myth, however, persists. The Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels Universal Exposition is repeatedly invoked throughout this anthology as some grand modernist utopia. Created by Le Corbusier and/or Iannis Xenakis (depending on your reading of creation myths), the Philips Pavilion contained an elaborate audiovisual projection system of loudspeakers, screens and projectors in which Varèse's *Poème Électronique* and Xenakis's *Concret PH* were played back in alternating rotation. Both pieces are presented back to back here, together with *Aspekt*, an outstanding 1966 composition by German composer Konrad Boehmer, who had visited the Pavilion as a teenager and was fascinated by its thrusting radicalism.

Beautiful, strange and futuristic, the Philips Pavilion has a distinct advantage in that it was demolished some time after the Exposition closed. This permits Hinant to mythologise it still further by mourning it as a "building that was destroyed – which seems to be what generally happens to new forms that are at all utopian". This particular new form proved so well constructed, however, it ended up earning the wrecking crew's grudging respect for its remarkable resilience. Had it survived and become the venue for Hardcore raves or James Last conventions, music history might well have been deprived of yet one more legend. Meanwhile, stories and fictions abound.

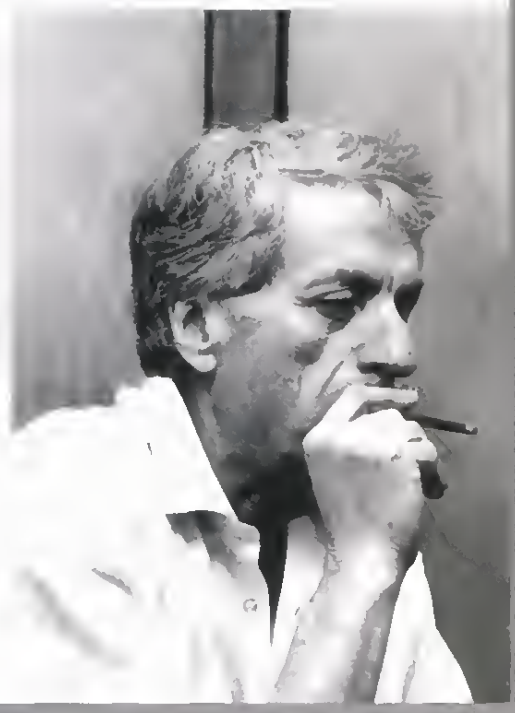
On *Corale*, dating from 1921, Antonio Russolo's orchestrated scales and processions fit almost too neatly with brother Luigi's attempts to systematise engine noises into some kind of a revolutionary Solfa. German film maker Walter Ruttmann's radio play *Wochende* (sic. Sub Rosa misspell both Ruttmann and the piece's title, which was originally the English word *Weekend* anyway. Such errors are scattered throughout the notes), evoking a weekend in Berlin and first broadcast in 1930, enmeshes itself in similar preoccupations, including as it does the sound of a marching brass band and a soprano practising scales. Ruttmann's biographical note takes a further fictional leap, claiming "Ruttmann soon abandoned his avant garde ideas in favour of Nazi ideology" and that the editing technique used on *Weekend* would be "improved to form the basis of concrete music". So much for "ex nihilo". Pierre Schaeffer's rejection of "anecdotal sound" is skated over in favour of the elegant loops and gradations of his 1948 *Études Violettes*.

Though Hinant dismisses the term 'electronic music' as meaningless in the context of this anthology, he makes no attempt whatsoever to indicate what is meant here by 'noise', leaving many attendant considerations to pass unnoticed. How then to explain the close proximity of Nam June Paik's *Hommage À John Cage* to Cage's own *Rozart Mix*? Both use similar sound sources and tape manipulations, but to such different effect that, in later years, Cage went to some pains to put considerable distance between their work, going so far as to remark in 1982 that Paik's life had been "devoted, it seems to me, not to sounds but to objects". But then Cage had a horror of narrative interpretation of his work. All the same, there's a small monograph waiting to be written on the use of baby cries and children's voices in early avant garde compositions.

Passing from the already available material to the previously unreleased reveals far more interesting prospects like "Trance #2", a brief fragment dating from 1965 from first Velvet Underground drummer Angus McLise, accompanied by Tony Conrad and John Cale. It comes with the promise of still more to come, as does Pauline Oliveros's strenuously thoughtful 30 minute piece for Moog synthesizer, "A Little Noise In The System". And more recent selections have much to recommend them: 'Bundle/Conduit 23' from Paul D Miller aka DJ Spooky reveals a dark conceptual toughness, while Ryoji Ikeda's "One Minute" reaches out to embrace whole chronologies in its scant 60 seconds. Let's hope the compilers of the second volume take note: otherwise be prepared for *The Best Noise And Electronic Music Album Ever. Part Two.*

Wheezing and puffing: Pauline Oliveros, Iannis Xenakis

Sub Rosa's avant garde chronicles attempt to map the 20th century's defining noises with mixed results, says Ken Hollings



PHOTOS: GINELA GAMPER (OLIVEROS), CAROLINE FORBES (XENAKIS)

infuriatingly under-utilising his vast ability of late, but there are *no* such worries here. Steve Smith contributes rolling, thunderous floor toms and precise four square rhythm, and organist Tom Coster (formerly of *Lotus* period Santana) displays a Hammond B3 tone full of Proustian recall for an age of fusion long since departed.

Delivered with velocity and fury, its ten tracks mount an all-out sensory assault. That variation is not a priority this time around doesn't not presuppose a lack of subtlety. Using both solid bodied and archtop guitars, Coryell produces a range of tones and inventive solos that are both mystifying in their execution and satisfying in their results. The musicians' interplay, meanwhile, is dramatic and full of tension. The power trio is enjoying a resurgence of interest right now, and "Finale: Wes And Jimi" shows why. Paying homage to two of his biggest influences, Montgomery and Hendrix, Coryell melds their disparate styles into his own without a hint of pastiche, in a way that restores credibility to jazz rock fusion.

CURSOR MINOR
EXPLOSIVE PIECE OF MIND
LO RECORDINGS LCD29 CD

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

"Don't leave your mind alone," intones Cursor Minor's Robert Tubb, from Chichester, in a deliberately drab and unmistakably English voice on his debut album, which follows last year's schizophrenic *Thismansadventure* EP. On this evidence, he's certainly practising what he preaches. Half hyperactive cabin fever electronics, half new wave songcraft, it's an extraordinarily precocious, if not always loveable collection that marries the berserk sonic possibilities of computer music to the glum realities of life seen through the weirdest of lenses. When he sings, on "Like DNA", *"People person pushing wishing working walking waiting hating . taxes buses rushes pushes dashes,"* the world as configured in his songs looks pretty much like the one Londoners might see from their window. But his excursions into more surreal territory make it hard to tell whether he's describing heaven or hell.

The musical base for his askew world view is even quirkier, mixing 80s snare drum hits, dysfunctional rhythms, drunken foghorn synthesizers and ice cream van melodies. The album alternates fully operational songs – well, at least when the vocals aren't too heavily processed or distorted – with snatches of scrambled sonic data, jittery Squarepusher-style drum shreddings and other bites culled from TV channel-hopping. The formula occasionally feels contrived, but when it comes together the effect is new and strangely affecting. Grinding along on an early 80s riff, the album's tightest and most twisted song, "Remote Control", reimagines life as a video, with Tubb celebrating how *"we can make it fast or make it slow"*, over music that micky-mouses his words. Essentially a diagnosis of the cumulative symptoms of media overload, Tubbs sounds like he's talking from experience.

DJ/RUPTURE
MINESWEEPER SUITE
TIGERBEAT6 MEOW045 CD

BY JOHN MULVEY

Drawing attention to the dismal state of mix CDs in his review of Coldcut's *70 Minutes Of Madness* reissue (*The Wire* 220), Peter Shapiro closed with the final plea, "This is still the best commercially available mixtape ever . Will someone please do something about it?" His plea is answered here, after a fashion, by the arrival of DJ/Rupture's *Minesweeper Suite*.

It would be a little rash to claim *Minesweeper Suite* has usurped Coldcut's place. Nevertheless, here's a mix CD notable for virtuoso turntable skills that enhance the music rather than distract from it, and a breathtaking eclecticism that – his association with Kid606 notwithstanding – has a seriousness of intent beyond mere plunder-prankstersm. At his own label Website (reliq.net/soot/), /Rupture, aka Jace Clayton, a former Harvard student now living in Madrid, presents a mission statement of sorts. "Soot Records was founded in late 1999 as a strike against geography. Contemporary experiments in digital audio and breakbeat reconstruction are informed by North African musical traditions."

If the methodology sounds rather austere on paper, in practice /Rupture's three turntable mixing, excellent taste and grasp of dynamics demonstrate that party instincts can, unusually, coexist with intellectual ones. On last year's superb *Gold Teeth Thief* mix, he kicked off with Missy Elliott's "Get Ur Freak On". This time, he expands on Timbaland's orientalism by lifting the loop from his "Ugly" production for Bubba Sparxxx, and warping Aaliyah's "We Need A Resolution" into even more ornate shape.

That track, however, is merely the entry level to *Minesweeper Suite*. /Rupture has developed an enviable inability to differentiate between 'high' and 'low' art without resorting to satire. The album takes in DAT Politics, Borbetomagus, dancehall from Cutty Ranks and General Degree, plenty of splatterbreaks from Aphasic and DJ Scud (whose Ambush label is plainly a formative influence, alongside Muslimgauze), and even Sade. What emerges from musical pile-ups is love, respect and an ability to make powerful cross-genre connections. It's as if the playfulness of Kid606 and most of his usual cabal has been given an educational purpose instead of a destructive one. At his densest and most audacious, /Rupture mingles Middle Eastern dub with digital thrash, spoken word from Gregory Whitehead, So Takahashi's ascetic minimalism and, finally, Nina Simone's "Plain Gold Ring".

The nerve and technique are extraordinary, propelled by a vision that extends far beyond the usual 'global village' reductivism of most ethno/electronic projects. *Minesweeper Suite* criss-crosses the planet to uncover secret links and echoes, unities of melodic systems and artistic purposes, without resorting to glib assimilation. A timely restatement of how mix CDs can both surprise and stimulate, it's a remarkable achievement.

GRATKOWSKI/GRAEWE/ LINDBERG
ARREARS
RED TOUCAN RT9320 CD

BY BILL SHOEMAKER

Familiarity between improvisors is a double-edged sword. Certainly, shared histories facilitate coherence in improvised music, but they can also limit its reach. Mixing with musicians from tangential circles often proves to be a necessary catalyst for new twists on established patterns, if not wholesale conceptual breakthroughs. Recorded at the Loft in Cologne, *Arrears* documents such a case, the first concert by a trio comprised of two longstanding collaborators and a colleague with whom they have infrequently crossed paths. In addition to working as a duo with pianist Georg Graewe, reed player Frank Gratkowski is a member of his quartet and an alumnus of his GrubenKlangOrchester. Bassist John Lindberg also had a short stint in Graewe's large ensemble prior to Gratkowski's, but otherwise he hadn't played with the pianist for years. Additionally, Lindberg had only performed with Gratkowski once before the making of *Arrears*. Subsequently, the strong sense of discovery marking these five improvisations accounts for their occasional tentative moments, as well as their boldest.

Generally, the degrees of familiarity separating the three do not impede the proceedings. Even so, they require such conventional salutations as long tones and trills before the conversation can deepen. It's tempting to attribute the melancholic tinge of much of the music to Graewe, as he frequently opts for a minor harmonic feel, particularly in his shimmering, silence-punctuated fragments. Even his most rapidfire, syntactically dense statements have a cool limpid attack, which often stands in stark contrast against the otherworldly timbres of Lindberg's bowing, and the growl and grumble of Gratkowski's bass and contrabass clarinets. Yet this should not imply an impassiveness on the pianist's part. At various points, Lindberg's rigorous attack causes Graewe to respond in kind, while Gratkowski's plaintive alto saxophone prompts a surge up and down the keyboard, splaying tightly arpeggiated motifs. Yet, more often than not, there is no obvious trigger when Gratkowski, Graewe, and Lindberg converge. It just happens of its own accord.

BERNHARD GÜNTER
MONOCHROME RUST/ DIFFERENTIAL
LINE 009 2XCD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Günter sizzles on the threshold of audibility – now what's left to say about these pieces? Bruckner's symphonic high peaks levelled and symphonic tradition emptied out? A reaction to information overload and the everyday congestion of contemporary life? Tai chi for the ear, readjusting auditory balance and clearing the channels? A world glimpsed in a grain of sand? A test of endurance? Soundtrack to a quantum world? A practical joke? Pond life? A moth's hearing? A final Beckettian fizzle? *Monochrome Rust* evokes Rothko?

Practical difficulties: where to set the volume level, whether to use headphones, whether you have heard it if you've played it but not heard it, where to find time in a day for this set when it's difficult enough to find time for Morton Feldman's time-consuming and very beautiful music, whether to read, write, paint, move around, cook, gaze from a window while it is on.

The bottom line is fascination. Gunter has made music which listeners of many persuasions have found fascinating. Rhythm as in flame flickers, dancing *Differential* offers more muted sizzling on the verge of inaudibility, tiny cricket sounds, liquid drizzle, desiccated rattle. Explanations may be endlessly rehearsed but the bottom line is intractable. Günter's music has the capacity to fascinate the receptive.

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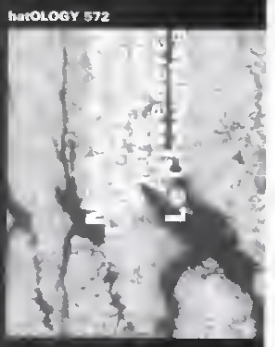

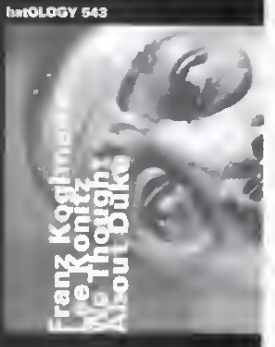

KEV HOPPER
SAURUS
DRAG CITY DC223 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

The best track on Kev Hopper's last release, the fine *Whispering Foils*, was Sean D'Hagan's sun-drenched tune, "Lamalou Les Bains". Over sultry vibes, marimba and acoustic guitar, Hopper's musical saw whistled out the melody, slipping the listener directly into exotica heaven. Taking his cue from there, Hopper has penned half a dozen highly melodic pieces that place the saw centre stage. He has completely reclaimed this strange instrument, unfailingly ethereal and poignant, from its dodgy associations as folk club or music hall novelty, and repositioned it as a thoroughly modern melodic voice – a dreamboat with teeth. His technique is surprisingly sure, his confidence has increased since the last album, and the tricky leaps of the tunes are negotiated with accurate flair.

Barely reaching 24 minutes, this mini-album is an exercise in understatement. All the tracks are instrumental except for "You're A Delicacy", which Hopper sings as an odd amalgam of Brian Wilson and folk singer Shirley Collins. Elsewhere, the saw's accompaniment is enriched by silky vocals from Minnow's Kelsey Michael and Rhodri Marsden, who also recorded everything. "The Fairy Lawn", at eight minutes more than double the length of anything else on the CD, stretches out into Stereolab territory, much helped by Michael's singing. Hopper has a delicate touch, but it's unlikely that anybody drifts off to sleep during any music by the ex-bass player of Stump. His guitar, laptop and drum playing have enough edge to prevent this becoming a total lounge blissout. More interesting than that, it's a highly personal, intriguing statement from an artist whose next move should be carefully watched.

INSTITUT FUER FEINMOTORIK
PENETRANS
STAUBGOLD STAUB25 CD

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

That a group now dedicates themselves solely to the idea of the 'empty turntable' – turntables played without records prepared in the manner of John Cage – is no surprise. After all, we already have no-input mixer artists, shortwave splicers and field recorders of powerline interference. The medium, the tool, is the message. Indeed, we've so ingested our tools, our media, that the message simply *is*, buzzing around us like highwire hum.

What is surprising about Southern German quartet Institut Fuer Feinmotorik is that they have pursued their minimalist practice over the course of seven releases already. Their latest, *Penetrans*, proves the project worthy of continuation. Not that it necessarily shows development, progress or any other such modernist shibboleth. After all, good, stripped down rock doesn't evolve, it just rocks. In the same spirit, *Penetrans* restricts itself to eight turntables, four mixers, two compressors, various unnamed treatments and *zero* records. Rich in syncopated funk and a dozen shades of grey, it amounts to a kind of roots Techno, the 21st century equivalent of a jug band, perhaps.

Well, on "Wird Es Sehr Weh Tun?" ("Will It Hurt?") the buzz of a rubber band resembles puffing into a cider jug, while the promiscuous rattle on "Rufen Sie Die Polizei" ("Call The Police") approximates a washboard jig or a cadenza for spoons. Of course, the group's titles carry them far from the usual back porch blues, even as downhome irony and pragmatism keeps them grounded. "Behalte Du Deinen Traum, Ich Behalte Das Geld!" shrills one title. "You Keep Your Dream, I'll Keep The Money!"

JOHN WILKES BOOZE
FIVE PILLARS OF SOUL VOL 1: MELVIN VAN PEEBLES
AFFIRMATION JWB2 CD

FIVE PILLARS OF SOUL VOL 2: TANIA HEARST
AFFIRMATION JWB4 CD

WHISKY AND PILLS
FAMILY VINEYARD FV15 7"

BY BEN WATSON

Combining the name of a presidential assassin with a word for liquor must constitute some kind of attack on Middle America. John Wilkes Booze also call themselves "Southern Indiana's premier R&B band", a hard claim for a non-resident to substantiate, but their emphatic drums, bass and guitar have a declarative monumentality that makes their music forceful and attractive. Their organist has all his garage soul licks down. The recording isn't slick, but if bass and drums sound boxy, they're in different boxes, and so the composite sound is three dimensional and satisfying. *Nuggets*-inspired punk acts often lean towards tinniness, but here a solid beat achieves heaviness without the sonic pile-up resorted to by lesser musicians. The singer's falsetto and panic-struck spoken word is just the right spritzer, invoking "The Blimp" from *Trout Mask Replica*, early Devo and Culturcide.

The short, three song tribute to novelist, film maker and soul man Melvin Van Peebles starts funky, but rapidly tips towards caterwauling expressionism. "Tania" was the name adopted by millionaire's daughter Patty Hearst in 1974 when, kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army, she switched sides and began wielding a submachine gun on bank raids. Again, this short suite – just five songs – has its unapologetic music embroidered with cultural and political meanings. both packages include printed inserts which explain JWB's reasons for calling Peebles and Hearst two of their five "pillars of soul". Coupled with tasty screenprinted covers, one's impression is of a group intent on improvising a revolutionary culture out of the media flotsam and jetsam of post-60s USA. All it needs is a yodel, and the unvarnished unison Country of "Meanwhile, At The Hideout" would be perfect. We await the next three pillars with impatience.

Coupled with "Marc Bolan Makes Me Want To Fuck", the "Whisky And Pills" 7" shows that the info-rich extras cannot deter JWB from their mission, which is live and direct and twangy. JWB are musically righteous, politically aware and undogmatic. They sound like what Bloomington, Indiana, needs right now – but then again, a non-resident can only guess.

GUY KLUCEVSEK
THE HEART OF THE ANDES
WINTER & WINTER 9100742 CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Accordionist and composer Guy Klucevsek was recently seen touring with Dave Douglas's Charms Of The Night Sky quartet and in duo setting with fellow accordionist Alan Bern. Approached through its 22 short pieces, some of them linked into mini-suites, *The Heart Of The Andes* is even more rarefied. The title notwithstanding, Klucevsek in the flesh is a more obviously humorous guy than he is on this disc. Most of these tunes are original compositions, although there's one apiece by Douglas and guitarist Phillip Johnston. There's also a reading of Shostakovich's *24 Preludes & Fugues For Piano*, which underlines Klucevsek's passion for treating his instrument as an archetypal sound generator – sometimes he goes as far as impersonating the whole orchestra. His palette can be wide indeed, setting up low swathes of wheeze as constants, while trigger fingerings gush out wayward solo lines. He'll hold tones hovering with big bellows, a romping folksiness cutting straight to bony-shiver sustain. Combined with jazz and classical remnants, these Eastern European motifs end up as an individual concoction. "The Return Of The Microids" section is dedicated to Bartók's memory and the "Portables" collection links a series of dance pieces. On the title suite Klucevsek's accordion gets near to the fully roused sound of a church organ, miked up close for maximum bass bleed. He also clunks keys to add rhythmic vitality, unleashing an especially violent outburst on Douglas's "Variety". Even so, bathing the disc in delicate hues, Stephan Fritsch's wraparound sleeve mural doesn't betray its contents.

GYÖRGY LIGETI
THE LIGETI PROJECT II
TELDEC 8573882612 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

This second volume of Teldec's Ligeti cycle follows a trajectory from texture to harmony and then to melody, represented by his classic orchestral trilogy of psychologically charged landscapes. *Atmospheres* (1961), *Lontano* (1967) and *San Francisco Polyphony* (1973-74). The performances, by The Berlin Philharmonic under conductor Jonathan Nott, are so alive with fastidious detail, they practically reinvent the works, while the presence of two previously unrecorded early scores, *Concert Romanesc* (1951) and *Appariitions* (1958-59), make this the definitive document of Ligeti's relationship to the orchestra.

Atmospheres and *Lontano* contain some of the great set pieces of postwar orchestral writing. *Atmospheres* emerges out of silence, with oozing blisters of clustery noise dispersing to all corners of the orchestra. All the energy and tension of the piece eventually surges into the piccolos, shooting off the top of the orchestral frame, where they are met at the other side by rumbling double basses. Such a conceptual gesture owes much to Ligeti's experience of electronics. The seamless interlocking of massed sonority heard in *Lontano* is also testament to the legacy of his formative work in the studio. Jonathan Nott offers a harder edged *Lontano* than either the classic Ernst Bour version or the later Claudio Abbado performance. His approach highlights the internal tensions between Ligeti's warm harmonic palette and the darker presences of something unsaid. A vast chasm of orchestral octaves opens up from nowhere, and sounds move covertly against backgrounds too blurred to define.

The blinding complexity and rhythmic awkwardness of *San Francisco Polyphony* have led to it being unjustly neglected. Some

conductors have even told Ligeti that it was unplayable, but Nott and The Berlin Philharmonic turn its technical challenges into music making of tremendous drive and spontaneous energy. Its clashing blocks of material sometimes have an Ivesian quality, as the orchestra screams and belches with dislocated logic.

Concert Romanesc is a student work crammed full of waggish humour and references to Bartók and Shostakovich. Its vivid orchestral style and a delight at upsetting the applecart give some indication of Ligeti's later preoccupations. But *Apparitions* is his first masterpiece. Often considered as little more than a dry run for *Atmospheres*, it revels in the serious slapstick that would later become central to Ligeti's art.

MAIN
TAU
(K RAA K)3 K031 CD

BY JIM HAYNES

After the 1992 *Hydra-Calm* diptych, Robert Hampson proposed Main as the personification of "drumless space", a nebulous metaphor to describe his expeditions into textural minimalism. Originally, this simply meant removing percussion from the narcotic mantras and colossal drone rock grooves invoked by Main's predecessor Loop. But during his six years as the sole proprietor of Main, "drumless space" has come to mean the complete separation from rock. He's has pushed this concept so far as to embrace it as a form of asceticism that denies him the pleasure of rock ecstasy, as well as the drone's capacity for transcendence. That's not to say Main's recordings are not without their fragile beauty. Rather, Hampson has reinvented Main as an Isolationist version of musique concrète.

Though it has been several years since Main released a proper album (not counting Hampson's collaborations with Janek Schaefer, Antenna Farm and Organum), *Tau* picks up immediately where he left off with the *Firmament* series. His compositions continue to eschew effects-laden guitar for the modulation of laptop treated samples. More often than not, he clips his alien, synthetic sounds with bracketing silences that prevent them from giving too much away about their origins and destinations. Contrary to the overwhelming secrecy found within *Tau*, Hampson has oddly allowed the vernacular of MicroHouse to speak briefly during the third movement of "heuristic", where a gentle repetition of an elegant, ring modulated tonality recalls methods employed by Vladislav Delay, Thomas Jirku and other Chain Reactionists. Exactly why he decided to include such a blatant reference amid his otherwise typically radical reconstructions is unclear. But don't expect Hampson to be dropping the bass anytime soon. After all, this is still "drumless space".

MIMIR
MIMIR
STREAMLINE 1012 CD

HIRSCHE NICHT AUFS SOFA
IM SCHATTEN DER MOHRE
STREAMLINE 1013 CD

MIRROR
DIE SPIEGELMANUFAKTUR
DIE STADT DS46 LP

BY JULIAN COWLEY

At the time *Im Schatten Der Möhre* was recorded, Hirsche Nicht Aufs Sofa was Cologne musician Christoph Heemann with Achim Pli Khan and Andreas Martin. An inspired assemblage of disparate materials, it was issued on vinyl in 1987 and is Heemann's personal favourite of the group's albums. Voices, reciting and singing in German, instrumental sounds, fragments of noise, snatches of melody, drones and concrete snippets are edited, manipulated and fused into controlled atmospheres. As the tale unfolds, mood gets physical in a montage suggesting edginess, displacement and lost security, until an unfeasibly jaunty tune brings it all to a close.

Mimir's third album has the feel of musicians making the music they wanted to hear when nothing around quite matched. The players in question are Heemann and Martin, Jim O'Rourke, Silverman and Legendary Pink Dot Edward Kaspel. They appear to take their lead from Krautrock at its most pastoral or nebulous – Ashra's guitar driven sun-glint exultation, Faust's freaked-out al fresco, Popol Vuh's panoramic awe. It's spacious, often melodic and it's got a glow that permeates all six tracks, regardless of whether they're starkly etched on acoustic guitar or cloaked in swirling electronic mist. The two concluding tracks in particular suggest the soundtrack for a film that Werner Herzog has not yet made.

Die Spiegelmanufaktur is a new vinyl release by Mirror, Heemann's duo with Andrew Chalk, plus guest O'Rourke. It's issued as a picture disc with monochrome artwork by Chalk, with a single long piece on either side. Each suggests activity viewed through heat haze. A drone like a hovering, luminescent cloud casts a shimmer across the actions, softening them towards indistinctness. Pipes and whistles are blown, cymbals are stroked, other metal is rattled and struck. A halo surrounds these sounds. The German Romantic poet Novalis wrote of "the art of making a subject remote", of conferring "the dignity of the unknown" upon the familiar. With Mirror, Heemann demonstrates his ability to make the familiar strange.

NAKED CITY
LIVE VOL 1: KNITTING FACTORY 1989
TZADIK TZ7336 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Naked City are the group that sprung fully formed from the forehead of John Zorn, here at last they're presented in the form for which they were emotionally designed: live and unrepentant in front of their natural audience in downtown New York circa 1989. This album documents the group performing many months in advance of their self-titled studio debut. All the myth-making compositions are present, including "Snagglepuss", "Inside Straight" and "Blood Duster", as well as the covers of "Shot In The Dark", "I Want To Live" and "Chinatown" that made the studio release instantly compelling and ultimately iconoclastic. The live album not only enhances Zorn's prescient compositional vision but also demonstrates the outstanding discipline with which his chosen musicians handle this complex material in front of an audience. For good measure, it is also brimming with essential performances from all involved.

When alto saxophonist Zorn bought together Bill Frisell on guitar, Wayne Horvitz on keyboards, Fred Frith on bass and Joey Baron on drums for a "compositional workshop", his aim was to push to the limit, and beyond, what could be achieved with such a format. To accomplish such this desire, he imaginatively utilised a process akin to stream of consciousness to produce confrontational, full-frontal epigrams that encapsulated and integrated totally disparate ideas and themes. Surf guitar, rockabilly, R&B, soul, bluegrass, bop, cool jazz, thrash, punk, blues, Ambient and free improv vie for inclusion. Yet all are introduced in balanced measure, guided by a genius's ear for strategic contrast –not only in terms of theme, but also of tone and texture. Stylistically, it's an Armageddon free for all, but the intelligence, discipline and control that Zorn brought to bear on the contents set new standards in paradigm-busting practice.

Wearing his obsessions on his sleeve, he also wanted the group to create beautiful covers of his favourite film composers. Interspersed between groundbreaking contemporary compositions, homages such as the one to Ennio Morricone's "Erotico" draw out sensual, evocative performances. And the late John Patton's "The Way I Feel" takes the encore spot, replete with a visceral guitar solo out of the Bill Frisell textbook.

Indeed, Frisell is on top form throughout, negotiating mercurial changes with relish, while delivering a variety of tone and bite that immediately fit each new context. Zorn's acidic alto burns throughout the set and Horvitz plays with insightful complicity, locking into the musical mission with evangelical fervour. Baron too plays with character defining candour and Fred Frith, an outstanding guitarist and composer in his own right, pins down the bass with unerring accuracy.

For the uninitiated, this initial release in a planned *live* series acts as a superb introduction to a legendary group's work.

CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE
MUSIC FOR BIG EARS
STAALPLAAT STCD156 CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

The highly site-specific *Music For Big Ears* was written for a Berlin bell tower and performed by its composer Charlemagne Palestine with the tower's carilloneur in residence, Jeffrey Bossin. But so brief a description doesn't do justice to the album. Palestine has spoken of the crushing physical effort of making the work, the precariousness of being stuck up in the belfry, where vertigo caused real problems for some of his sound team, not to mention the danger of being so close to so loud and heavy a sound, an ordeal which the composer compares to "elephant fucking". The inspiration for *Music For Big Ears* (given the circumstances of its performance, bleeding ears might have been more apt) comes from various sources. John Cage's arrangements for bells; Palestine's own youthful campanology experiences in New York; the interest in percussive rhythmical procedures that preoccupied his generation of minimalists. Like much early minimal work, *Big Ears* is a time-based experience: the bells produce their own overtones, and the sounds the ringers and the people down below hear are variously subjected to delay. On paper it might look like Palestine is setting up simple cross-rhythms or

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accelerations of tempo In actuality, it is something else altogether

Palestine has long been interested with what he describes as "sonority versus energy". It's something heard elsewhere in his electronic music, where oscillators are used to distort naturally produced sounds Here, energy is transformed, at times in an abandoned, pugilistic manner, into an entity that offers up its own sonic fantasies and trances The last quarter of *Music For Big Ears* suddenly brings you back to earth with what sounds like the distant tolling of a deeper toned bell. Though it self-evidently presages the end of the piece, its darker, apocalyptic resonances don't go unremarked.

WILLIAM PARKER QUARTET WITH LEENA CONQUEST
RAINING ON THE MOON
THIRSTY EAR THI571192 CD

BY BILL SHOEMAKER

Raining On The Moon picks up where bassist William Parker's last, almost universally acclaimed quartet album, *O'Neal's Porch* (Centering) left off. "Hunk Pappa Blues", a ply of Blakey-like big beats, plump vamping bass and short nettling horn phrases, launches wide open, hard swinging solos by alto saxophonist Rob Brown and trumpeter Lewis Barnes, fuelled by the sly rhythmic shifts of Parker and drummer Hamid Drake Both straight up and outward-bound, it affirms the ongoing vitality of the African-American jazz continuum Reflecting long held tradition, Parker uses the tune as a warm-up for vocalist Leena Conquest's first entrance on "Song For Hope", a tune with a quietly insistent worksong drive The layering of pride and pain in Conquest's voice is reminiscent of Black Jazz label-era Jean Carn It is a stirring performance, but the glow of 70s positivism is largely supplanted by the anxiety of the final lyric, *"My name is Hope/Would you let me live?"*

Conquest is then whisked away for "Old Tears," a sad motif hinged to a descending bassline like a trapdoor to a bottomless pit, whose depths Barnes and Brown plumb with well-wrought passion It intensifies the stage setting for Conquest's return for the title tune, which has the 'talking at ya' grit of Andy Bey's work with Gary Bartz's Nu Troop. For the remainder of the album, Conquest gradually assumes a commanding presence, even on the two lulling tracks where she is nestled among flute, muted trumpet, doussn gouni, and brushed snare

Tradition dictates an ultimately uplifting message, which Parker provides with the rallying "James Baldwin To The Rescue" Another deceptively simple bundle of riffs and skeletal melodies nudged along by a mid-tempo groove, it is an excellent vehicle for the horns to dance about Conquest, as she slowly brings the piece close to a simmer. It is the emotional apex of an sterling album that seems to end too soon

PERE UBU
ST ARKANSAS
GLITTERHOUSE GRCD554 CD

BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

St Arkansas is the most focused, succinct and downright enjoyable Pere Ubu album to emerge since their reformation in the late 1980s It delivers ten tracks in under 42 minutes with an economy, thematic unity and sense of purpose that suggests Pere Ubu's present incarnation, the most stable and longest serving in the group's history, has finally found its voice That might sound absurd, seeing how the voice in question is David Thomas's, as ever But where Thomas's extra-Ubu work with The Two Pale Boys found an effective vehicle for the genial wit and surreal raconteur that graced, for instance, *Erewhon* and the live *Meadville*, it has never been quite so clear where the locus of Pere Ubu's intent resides With *St Arkansas*, however, Thomas returns to those same oblique landscapes, but surveys the terrain through altogether darker lenses It's something akin to a hollow eyed vision of the same geographic faultlines that scarred its predecessor, the masterful if somewhat sprawling *Pennsylvania* But this time it is viewed more directly from the nether side of Thomas's solo persona, and the geography floats free of any specific location

About *Pennsylvania*, Thomas said, "Geography can provide one kind of incorruptible language . a language beyond words and out of the reach of liars." For *St Arkansas*, Pere Ubu collectively inhabit that language, the semi-mute, inexpressible and hence incorruptible language of the "Slow Walking Daddy" Mr In-Between Head out six miles south of *Meadville*

Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

Brother JT's *In The Summertime/Blue Green* (Apartment APAREC021 7") is another lovely, Norwegian-only release by this great American Virtually everything from Brother JT's last decade's worth of recordings (almost everything since the dissolution of the fine, but too standardly appointed Original Sins) has been fantastic – disparate, personalised stabs into the eye of the great hurricane soul In his time these stabs have taken many forms, from guitar raunch to solo gospel vocals On this record, JT sings and layers up guitars while someone else plays drums, and the results are fine. The A-side is an oddly shaped update of a Tyrannosaurus Rex-type ode to warmth, and the B-side quivers with gorgeous shards of Yo La Tengo and The Velvets' string glimmer Heard together, they make me feel red all over You may feel it too. (BC)

The Buff Medways' *Troubled Mind/Leave My Kitten Alone* (Transcopic TRAN015 7") is further proof that Billy Childish is one of England's great post-pub thinkers. His musical work and its parallels in the worlds of poetry, publishing, painting and polemicism are a massive, unique, sustained gust of genius that will be appreciated sooner or later, and woe (WOE!) be to those fops who thed to diminish its importance while it is being spewed. The Buff Medways are Childish's most recent unit, and while they are neither as beat oriented as his ur-group, The Milkshakes, nor as punky as the more recent Headcoats, their sound has all the rough, pure power and beauty that marks his best musical work The general sound here is more akin to American 60s garage groups than might have been expected, but this is a single that sounds just the way a single is supposed to sound, and that's all right with me. And then some. (BC)

Matt Burt is an expathate American living in Norway, who recorded an earlier acoustic album for Stickman On *What Will The Title Be?* (Apartment APAREC019 7") he sticks to poetry and harmonium. His reading voice reminds me a bit of Damon Krukowski's, but his material is written with much of the same wildly pleasant flair as that of certain just-post-Beat West Coast poets· Meltzer, Brautigan, Coolidge, etc How Apartment Records could assume that there's an audience for something like this is completely beyond me But it remains a wonderful batch of Jack Spicer-descended Image play that really sounds pretty nice, especially when the harmonium kicks in and our minds' eyes can envision the smoke house of Kendra Smith (which is the contemporary soul centre of true bohemian California). (BC)

Wow, here's where mystery resides. I'm not familiar with **Jan Van Den Dobbielsteen**'s earlier works (and there are at least 13 volumes of them), but *Trainsongs* (Cosmic Volume #14 7") is wild It combines the sounds of two toy train events (I'll call them events because they seem to have occurred in an art context rather than a play context) and have heisted (sound system stylee) borrowings of a track or two by The Ethiopians It's utterly unclear what the 'point' of this recording is, but the mind buggers itself senseless trying to apply external logic to the assemblage – and it sounds fantastic (BC)

On *Hypnostatic Ground* (Orone OR54 7") you'll find gorgeous waves of gentle noise (although quite noisy in the context of this label) by **Mnem**, a young Finnish group. The buzz of creation on the A side generates its own source of gravity as it collects ambient noises just as bees might be drawn to a dwarf star made of honey The ultimate effect is not dissimilar to the craziest moments of Fripp & Eno's early collaborations And if that means "Swaztika Girls", so be it. The burbling menace of the B-side makes me remember how long those tube worms are supposed to be that gather around the vents on the ocean's floor. They're supposed to be long Real long. (BC)

Rosenberg's *Single* (Bottrop-Boy B-BOY06 7"), a collaboration by Rosy Parlane and Peter Rehberg, is a very Euro-sounding project, based on loops created by this pair that were later mangled by Pita. The two tracks combine the ringing of undersea bells with the feel of boots being pulled out of deep mud and the kind of doomed sound that cartoons might have if they knew they were going out of vogue forever These soundscapes may be composed of minimal gestures, but they'll fill any mouth that gets close to them. (BC)

If you've ever heard of New Zealand musician Bill Wood, chances are that it was related to his work with Campbell Kneale's Birchville Cat Motel But on **1/3 Octave Band**'s *Tarakohe/Ritual of Gravity* (Fusteron FUSE027 7"), Bill shows that he has his own line of space rock/guitar drone/massive atmospherics as well Wood's music is new to my ears, but it's highly impressive He takes a very maximal approach to drones, filling the pulses of his endless frontiers with shifting arrays of instrumental intrigue and ominously pulsing lights A great thing, and on that thick Czech vinyl that weighs about a pound What more could you want? (BC)

San Francisco's Chris deGiere aka **Degiere** paints it kind of blue on his third release, *Diffusion Chamber* (Emanate EMA010 10"), a sapphire vinyl 10" with four tracks of moody electronica. The coloured wax, normally a hindrance to high fidelity, actually contributes to the grain and hiss of these Pole-influenced tracks, which exploit the full spectrum in their construction, building on top of groaning dub basslines into organically branching limbs Titled for the patch deGiere used in constructing these pieces, the record is far more interesting than that decision might indicate Slow flashes of gold and green illuminate a sandy floor across which bottom-heavy trawlers drag lumbering gear, hauling up all manner of silver-scaled, sand-blasted sealife in the process (PS)

Meanest Man Contest is the Oakland duo of producer Quarterbar and MC Enksolo, and their debut 7", *Contaminated Dance Step* (Weapon Shaped 7") travels a narrow path between the leftfield vistas of Anticon on the one hand and Def Jux on the other Both tracks, in fact, have a sort of wandering impulse at their core, moving restlessly from break to break, sample to sample, like a country kid leaping fences through the back acres. Still, there's a particularly urban edge to the title track not a street-savvy realism, but rather a corporate cynicism, and the lyrics concern the oh-so-topical issue of downsizing – sorry, "rightsizing" – from the point of view of the axeman. (PS) □

Reviewed by Byron Coley and Philip Sherburne

and the quasi-geography of *Pennsylvania* transmutes into the meta terrain of *St Arkansas*. Its freeways become an object of adoration for its disenfranchised, ceaselessly mobile inhabitants, its roadside diner signs reassure with the announcement of "*Good Cod Dinner, Fridays, $5 95*" and the promise of freedom is conveyed throughout by a 24 hour AM radio soundtrack.

This album provides the occasion to map the psychic geography of this Mr In-Between, the contours and gridlines traced through all the quotidian ephemera of bland but inwardly abyssal Americana. In a harrowed, occasionally baleful tone, delivered throughout with a close-miked presence, Thomas never loses sight of a deep warmth and affection for his subject matter. The nature of that subject matter might well have reduced Ubu to a role akin to The Paranoids in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying Of Lot 49*. For sure, the sound does have an altogether leaner, more garagey edge than any of Ubu's work over the last decade. But it's to their great credit, as well as a testimony to the strength of these songs, that the music here never descends into the merely parodic. Concept albums rarely come better than this.

POCKET
POCKET
2 13 MUSIC 2 13013 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Some albums just come crashing into your life like a wave escaping the beach, with a mighty life-affirming splash of electric guitar. In 1977, Elvis Costello's and Talking Heads' first releases both felt that way. Later and less mainstream, *Surfin' With Kenny Process Team* mixed Beefheart angst with a rush of joy. And now, from nowhere, come Pocket, with a dozen guitar, bass and drums instrumentals that dare you to whistle them out loud, but without insulting your intelligence. The album is carried by two contrasting guitars. Alex Ward's nasal sneer versus John Bisset's deep-throated, Vox AC30-amped twang. Bisset's melodies pit the guitars against each other, trading phrases in a spiralling, competitive hocket, until both collapse back into the main tune.

I think back to The Shadows, whose "Apache" sat astride the charts for ever when I was a kid, for a similar irony-free belief in the two-guitar instrumental. But Pocket bring more soul and aural filth to bear on their devotion to the redeeming power of melody. "Wellingtons" is driven by a Bo Diddley beat, "Horatio" is a sprightly march as played by Jimi Hendrix, and "Wily Coyote", written for This Heat's Charles Hayward, lets French drummer Olivier Picard get flash with the crash. "Tumba" shows Pocket at their effervescent best: a cod-flamenco climbing line rises and rises, until it resolves magnificently at its summit into a heartstopping major scale – an impressive rush for a debut album.

Now this is odd, because Alex Ward was previously known as a free improvising clarinettist, and John Bisset as leader of the LEGO electric guitar orchestra and improv promoter at North London's 2 13 Club, where the clock on the wall is forever stuck at 2:13. There is nary a hint of such pedigrees here, except perhaps on "Evens", where Ward plays one chorus as if tipping the hat to his erstwhile improvising partner Derek Bailey.

Right now, Pocket are hidden away on Bisset's 2:13 label, but if there's any justice in this rotten world, they are going to be enormous.

MICHAEL PRIME
REQUIEM
DIE STADT DS42 LP

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

A limited edition vinyl release from the former eminence verte of Morphogenesis, master of plant-derived bioelectrical sound and other organic and environmental explorations. The source sounds used on the album are mainly drawn from improvisations by Negative Entropy (Prime and Geert Feytons of Noise Maker's Fifes) and there's also a sound sculpture by artist Len Lye and the morphed voice of Joan Miró. The music is driven by a maximal aesthetic, composed of a heaving swarm of noises overlaid to the point of overload. But the sheer amorphousness of the work is wearing, amounting to a foggy and frustrating listen: it is essentially layer upon layer of heavily processed sound in a mid to upper register, with a hissy finish to it. Individual elements continually recede into the lo-fi murk and, rather than communicate with each other, the various strata are dragged down into a smudged and boxy uniformity. The thick blanketing of sound brings an oppressively enclosed atmosphere, but the problem with claustrophobia is that unless there's a frisson to the phobia you just want to be somewhere else. *Requiem*'s restlessly squirming movement gives it a certain forward momentum, but the lack of definition makes it a hard album to get a handle on.

ROVO
TONIC 2001
TZADIK TZ7239 2XCD

BY DAVID KEENAN

Rovo are a free-jamming trance rock outfit that draw members from the ranks of Japanese underground groups like Boredoms, Demi Semi Quaver and Omoide Hatoba. While their studio releases have seen them pursue the nowhere zone via the subtle phasing of percussive lines into a sky-kissing blur of electronics, the double live set *Tonic 2001* feels much more selfconsciously epic.

Yuji Katsui's violin dominates most of the tracks with a tone pitched somewhere between the fluttering waveforms of The Taj Mahal Travellers' Takehisa Kosugi and the rock furies of Simon House, from the UK psychedelic group High Tide. But at points Bill Laswell's ultra-polished mix pushes it towards the kind of porpoise-mating New Age flux that defines too much of his work. All of the tracks are heavy rhythmic workouts, bringing to mind a virtuoso version of Acid Mothers Temple. Except AMT are much closer to monomaniacal greasers like Hawkwind and Motörhead, while Rovo apparently prefer the more ornate stylings of King Crimson and *Dark Magus*-era Miles Davis. As a result they never quite scale the thuggishly ecstatic peaks attained by AMT's Makoto Kawabata and co. Still, they generate plenty of heat, with tracks like "Cisko" circling a sleazy riff that sounds like Wire circa *Pink Flag*, while analogue keyboards pour down like silver.

Like AMT, they also make the links between mantric rock jamming and minimalist composers like Terry Riley and Steve Reich, as they slowly rend the fabric of the jams, staggering their individual parts to create some fantastic, out of sync turnarounds. But the overall sound airbrushes the guts out of the record, despite the copious amounts of collective sweat evidently shed during their Tonic residence.

JANEK SCHAEFER
PULLED UNDER
AUDIOHI RECORDINGS AUDIOHI12 CD

BY JIM HAYNES

Inspired by vanguard turntablists Philip Jeck, Thomas Brinkmann and Boyd Rice to build "the world's most versatile turntable" (as declared by *The Guinness Book Of World Records*), Janek Schaefer has noticeably distanced himself from the gimmickry of his acclaimed Tri-Phonic turntable, as featured on *Pulled Under*. Here, Schaefer thoroughly abstracts all of his source material – mostly minidisc field recordings with a few turntable locked grooves and appropriations – into cleanly filtered surfaces of pure texture.

The result is a very cold album of undulating and flickering drones plunged into vast expanses of rumbling bass frequencies, while small, calculated events slash throughout the stereo field. The sporadic resurgence of Philip Jeck-ish vinyl loops into strung-out arpeggiations and seasick waltzes offer something beyond the general bleakness of *Pulled Under*, but then Schaefer strips these sounds of any antiquated charms by filtering out the surface noise crackle and digitally upgrading their tonalities to a broader sonic spectrum. If these vinyl moments were meant to refer to forgotten histories or aged memories, they're subsumed in the disc's drive for digital austerity.

In tightly controlling and exuberantly manipulating his source material, Schaefer proposes that his work is something of a cinematic trompe l'oreille. Such strategies originate from his intention to investigate the relationships between architectural precision, sonic dynamics and psychological landscaping. Yet when it is determined by his proclivity towards the surface of sound, this relationship slides into the discourse of the simulacrum – the postmodern term defining the simulated and/or reflective encounters between the signifier and the real. Not coincidentally, *Pulled Under* is a homage to *The Drowned World* by JG Ballard, who has been the victim of several rhetorical arguments about the simulacrum conducted by Jean Baudrillard. While Schaefer thankfully doesn't venture down the same ill-fated road of cutting art to fit theory, *Pulled Under* parallels both Ballard's dystopian poetry and Baudrillard's fatalist endgames.

SCION
ARRANGE AND PROCESS BASIC CHANNEL TRACKS
TRESOR 582002 CD

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

Few back catalogues in Techno are as precise and taut in intent and execution as that of the Berlin-based Basic Channel label formed by Moritz von Oswald and Mark Ernestus. The label debuted with the "Enforcement" 12" in 1993 and shut down with a final instalment, "Phylyps Trak II", in 1995. Their catalogue amassed nine

The Compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

Lee Perry

Internationally renowned cellist Yo Yo Ma has recently been exploring far less travelled ground. His investigations of cultural and musical syncretisms made possible by trade routes such as the Silk Road are far from the vanity project one might expect of such a celebrity. Deploying his star cachet to attract substantial corporate funding, Ma has launched an ongoing cultural juggernaut that includes worldwide concertising with works comissioned by numerous non-Western composers in addition to festivals, dance concerts, workshops, conferences, Websites, art exhibits and educational events. A two disc set containing some four dozen performances, ***The Silk Road: A Musical Caravan*** (Smithsonian Folkways 40438 2XCD), is not so much a souvenir of the aforementioned initiatives as the blueprint for their foundation. Four dozen selections represent musical traditions spanning the breadth of Central Asia and the Middle East; the tracklisting should entice new listeners and impress world beat aficionados all the same.

Most of this music was recorded by producer Jean Dunng, with some selections licensed from specialist labels (Pan, Traditional Crossroads, et al). The curatorial impulse at the heart of this collection balances an appreciation both for virtuosity and visceral impact. It is difficult to imagine a more accessible introduction to this vast region, which has lately been stained by political scapegoating and fundamentalist dogma. At each turn a new wonder is unveiled: the stately unison singing of Uzbekistan's Jurabek and Shuhrat Nabiev, or a recreation of drunkeness played on China's ancient silk-stringed guqin by Jiu Kuang. Confronted by a withering fusillade of ornate phrases sprayed from a dombra, it is hard to accept that the instrument has but two strings. Similarly, the Mongolian morin khuur sounds like it contains an entire orchestral section in its sonorous pair of strings. Fascinating in spite of its treacly title, the second disc, "Minstrels And Lovers", explores vernacular styles of Inner Asia, contrasting (within Kazakhstan alone) the spry twang of jew's harps with spectral melodies sketched by syhzghy flute. (RH)

Lee Perry's last Trojan album, *Jamaican ET*, received mysteriously good reviews in mainstream music magazines. Those who favourably reviewed that woeful album should be strapped down and made to check the ***Trojan Upsetter Box Set*** (Trojan TJETD021 3XCD) compiled by Dave Katz which would have been a contender as a premier league Perry product, if the third disc hadn't introduced some later tunes midway through. But it's still recommended for its budget price and rarer cuts like Twin Roots' "Know Love" — a sweetly chugging nine minute Black Ark discomix densely swathed in the Muton phasing that trademarked Perry's classic Black Ark sound. (SB)

Nu Shoots Inna Roots — Dub Version Style (Free Radical Sounds FRS004 CD) is the companion to the earlier vocal album (FRS003), which mixes an older generation of Jamaican vocalists — Junior Murvin, Mike Brooks, Prince Allah and the late Devon Russell — with a series of younger bloods, notably Bobo Blackstar and Wayne McArthur. Taken from UK and Jamaican 7" singles, they're all proven dancefloor shakers. As good a way as any to keep up with the roots scene's shift back towards traditional patterns of vocal following version. (SB)

Greensleeves' rhythm editions have been appearing so rapidly that a number of them have already slipped past relatively unnoticed — including Harvel Hart's *Zero Tolerance*, Goldfinga's *Hard Drive* and Scatta's *Martial Arts*. But ***Diwali — Greensleeves Rhythm Album #27*** (Greensleeves Grel727 CD) is of a different order. Current holder of the golden ticket, Steven 'Lenky' Marsden conjures up an almost bassless shower of shining light in the form of Diwali. It's an absolutely irresistible and effortless fusion of Bollywood and flamenco beats which pulls in three of Jamaica's leading female DJs — Tanya Stephens, Crissy D and Ce'Cile — as well as the usual glittering lineup of dancehall stars. Mo' Wax were dabbling with Lenky last year with no bites from either the leftfield or mainstream dance scenes, but surely the loop between modern reggae and HipHop is nearing completion as the gap between Lenky and Timbaland is now all but indiscernible. (SB)

Late Junction is a new BBC label that operates in conjunction with Radio 3's programme of the same name. However else it defines its remit, it's hard to go wrong with a live recording of American composer John Adams's standard, *Tromba Lontana*, included in its first batch of releases. But obviously ***A Late Junction Compilation #1*** (BBC Late Junction BBCLJ3D042 CD) is a closer approximation of the mother programme's catch-all avant gardism which embraces New Age fringe, rock, electronica, contemporary composition and more. Selected and mixed by the show's co-presenter Verity Sharp, there's some great stuff here. It's difficult to argue with pianist Kun-Woo Paik's rendition of a Busoni transcription of Bach, or even Plastikman's "Consume" (they share an implicit approach to maintaining integral structures), but it's hard to figure out how the more obscure (rainforest field ambience) or anodyne (Ben Christophers, for God's sake) fit in. Like the show, it is an eclectic playlist, certainly, and one to be welcomed. Any show that tries to make meaningful links between genres and traditions is a good thing, glitches and all. (LG)

Nigh on impossible to get hold of for 15 years, ***Cold Blue*** (Cold Blue Music CB000B CD) is a rewarding snapshot of composition in the decade or so leading up to 1984, when the recordings, in a slightly truncated form, were initially released. Veering from the guitar smashes of Chas Smith's *Beatrix* to the playful solfege construction of Daniel Lentz's *You can't See The Forest.*. *Music, Cold Blue* anticipates the new tonalities that characterise the post-minimal generation. James Tenney's *Spectral CANON For CONLON Nancarrow* holds up the rigorous end of Cold Blue's spectrum, but that's not to ignore the subtle touch of Ingram Marshall's mandolin and electronics duet of *Gradual Siciliano (For Gus)* or the barely suppressed tension that infects John Kuhlman's tight guitar rhythms on *In This Light*. David Mahler's *La Ciudad*, the CD's one new track, is a considered piece for solo piano. Coherence is dilated to extraordinary oceanic effect on Eugene Bowen and Harold Budd's guitar/synth treatments on *Wonder's Edge*. (LG)

El-P recently likened his Rawkus servitude to *"being mouth-fucked by Nazis"*. Not by a long shot, but the mighty razorteeth empire has gone through some strange growing pains since thinking they were bigger than they actually were a few years ago. The turntablist *Soundbombing I* was a celebration of independents' day, and unearthed unknowns hungry for a break and a beat. ***Soundbombing III*** (Rawkus 0881129172 CD/2XLP), featuring higher profile roughs like Method Man, the Lox and Noreaga, is a less ideological statement of where rap is at now. Kool G Rap and CNN's "My Life" has that 'Troutman upstream against the 405' feeling that confirms the vocoder's place in the perfect summer sound. Mos Def debuts two of his newest hobbies — rock and Destiny's Child's Beyoncé. She lends support to Mos's Black Jack Johnson rock-rap collab, but the result makes him sound like Saul Williams sounding like Keziah Jones sounding like Jimi Hendrix. Q-Tip lashes back at the haters with his surprisingly good "What Lies Beneath". *"Calls you Ziggy Stardust, but who's the major Tom?"*, he wonders, riffin' Bowie and Beecher Stowe in the same breath. Surprisingly, it's an OG Rawkus soldier, RA the Rugged Man, who reminds us why we cared about rap in the first place, rewinding down memory lane with "On The Block (Golden Era)". The part time pervert recalls Markey Fresh — *"Graffiti vandals/ Jimmy Bakker sex scandals"* — Big Daddy Kane AIDS rumours and Scott LaRock presaging both Biggie and Tupac. (HH)

Japanese musicians have always shown an affinity for Anglo-American styles of electronic music. ***Kinda-Tek(i)*** (Bambola BAMCD002 CD) showcases a dozen artists working within the framework of broken beat and future jazz, relying on heavy funk and Brazilian swing to move the music forward. The compilation ranges from Romp's classic intelligent Techno sound to the jazzy Garage of Shiba and Organ Language. On the more experimental side, Quante Jubila flips electro breaks like a robot tossing coins and Yakayuki Shiraishi turns wooden chimes into a post-Techno stormer. The psychedelic vertigo of Silicom's downtempo "Kes" is the gem here. (PS)

No Type, David Turgeon's Montréal-based Net-only label with 67 'releases' posted in the past four years, hits aluminium with ***The Freest Of Radicals*** (No Type IMNT0201/02 2XCD). True to No Type's range, there are plenty of sounds to captivate and confound spread across the two platters, cleverly titled "bait disc" and "switch disc". "Bait" presents the groovier stuff: distressed Techno (Eucci's "Barbizon & Tape"), Viratone Ballad's drum 'n' baste, and developmentally challenged HipHop of Tomas Jirku's "I think I'm In love". There's also beatless sound and noise, like Magali Babin's "Petit Jardin", or B33-45's blistering "Spook", a prickly analogue critter in the vein of Pan Sonic. Napalm Jazz's "De La Viande Bio" sticks to a relatively conventional IDM template — to exquisite effect. "Switch" offers a more understated approach, via drones, simmering whines and Ambient rumble from artists like Oeuf Korrekt, Diablamatomica, Chris Degiere and Alphacat. The common wisdom about the Internet being the music industry's great promotional device is overturned here: as a primer for NoType.com, it's a handy guide for navigating the label's roster. Happy mousing. (PS)

Electroplegic Workshop Vol 1 (Anticat 001 12") is the debut release from the fledgling Anticat label, with several different cuts from various artists who all have individual EPs slated for release over the coming months. The first track makes it a must: a slab of innovative DIY electro by Metronomy, largely made up out of vocal samples chopped into ludicrously funky percussive fragments along with a superb brain and feet flexing bassline. Multiplex offer two tracks of straightforward electronica, while on the flip things head off into uncharted waters. Lone Shark's "Transform Algebra" is a beatless drift of clicks, flecks of analogue graffiti, and feedback drones; while the closing track, "Sunlight", by Ob, a collective who build their own instruments and have previously worked on theatre, video and installation projects, is a psychedelic soup of guitar, vocals, and off-kilter sound FX. (JM) ☐ *Reviewed by Steve Barker, Louise Gray, Richard Henderson, Hua Hsu, Jerome Maunsell and Philip Sherburne*

12" releases in all, and a retrospective CD, but their fusion of the aesthetics of Jamaican dub, Chicago House and Detroit Techno into an original and highly influential Berlin sound. Their relentless application of mesmeric repetition subject to infinitely subtle variations was completely new in its time. Today, it sounds simultaneously classic and fresh. Part of their appeal was their total dedication to a singular form. But, stripped to the bone, on a home stereo it was possible to miss the point about Basic Channel. Heard over a sound system, it's clear how Basic Channel were building records for the distorting effects of cavernous club spaces. The imperfections of a bad rig simply made them sound better.

On this CD, the Chain Reaction duo Scion (Pete Kuschnereit aka Substance and Rene Lowe aka Vainqueur) have been given free access to rework the original tracks, using Ableton's LIVE audio software. The results are initially quite disorientating for Basic Channel devotees. Rather than crossfade one record into another in the conventional mix CD manner, Scion fuse the individual tracks in a variety of ways, bringing them in and out of the overall mix at unpredictable points. That said, none of their track reconstructions is particularly radical. Perhaps that would have felt too much like meddling with the Holy Grail of Techno.

SENDER BERLIN
GESTERN HEUTE MORGEN
TRESOR 189 CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Having started out as the organisers of Headquarters, Tresor Club's regular Wednesday night slot to encourage up and coming new talent among Berlin's young nighthawks, Hendrik Vaak, Torsten Litschko and Alexander Lukat went on to form Sender Berlin, a loose collective of DJs and producers dedicated to creating accessible, freeflowing Techno. The follow-up to their successful 1999 debut, *Spektrum Weltweit*, makes generous play of expectations. Roughly translated into English, the title of this polished assemblage of beats and images offers the bland promise of *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. And that's exactly what you get.

Forceful and unadorned, this is the sound of urban space transformed into an interstellar combat zone, spread across 12 'scenes' in which individual compositions are accompanied by an illustrated cell, complete with sprocket holes, as if they come from an as yet unrealised deep space cartoon adventure. Part Manga action strip, part graffiti art, part thumb-candy graphic, each illustration brings something out in the track it accompanies. A swirling star-flecked hull of a space cruiser rides the compelling forward thrust of "Prolog: Eine Andere Welt", glacial otherworldly architecture complements the gentle clarity of "Spaziergang In Neos Kosmos". A control panel emblazoned with the names of major Earth cities and a nuclear hazard symbol adds an extra chill to the poised dub shimmer on "Ja Oder Nein".

The dreamily skanking "Der Kontaktman" harks back to the deep space reverberations of Jamaica's Studio One, while the pulsating electronic tension of "Reise Zum Mond" recalls the terse precision of Detroit's System 01. Such associations aid Sender Berlin's invocation of a universe where humans are devolving into armoured cybernetic systems, even as the darkness of space threatens to consume whole planets. However, their blend of zero gravity grooves, slippery digital delays and cleanly delineated production values make you want to run this particular game again and again.

STRUNG
STRUNG
SUBLINGUAL SLR011 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Founded on a shared interest in improvisation and in stringed instruments, Strung are made up from incoming musicians to Amsterdam. Its nine members – plus four 'virtual' members – play violin, guitar, cello and a variety of homemades. Cor Fuhler's keyolin, for instance, is a violin played upside down with a keyboard action, while Steve Heather's whipolin is a disembodied cello fitted with hurdy-gurdy type wheels – make what you can of those descriptions. Mary Oliver and Allison Isadora play violins, the latter with electronic modulation. Meanwhile, Dr Johannes Rosenberg (deceased) from Sydney, Australia, sits in at the virtual harpsichord.

New Complexity composer Richard Barrett is present in his Improv guise, sampling strings with better, more concentrated results than those on the rather diffuse *Angel* by Furt, his duo with Paul Obermayer. "The group functions... in 'walk on/walk off' subdivisions or within fast moving conducted structures," we're told. Certainly the results are fast moving, spinning through 24 pieces in 48 minutes, each titled with a word beginning "Str-". The titles, meanwhile, signal the track's shaping textural idea. Insistent rhythms are housed in tracks marked "Stroppy" and "Straps". There are also traces of jazz violin ("Struth"), Metal guitar ("Strip") and Country banjo ("Straw"). Melody and lyricism aren't priorities, though they sometimes set up expectation just to subvert it. Imagine burrowing through a junkyard of strings, with musical detritus strewn liberally across the soundfield. *Strung* springs plenty of hectic fun, and it also provokes the odd thought.

ROGER SMITH
GREEN WOOD: IMPROVISED GUITAR SOLOS
EMANEM 4073 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Roger Smith could qualify as the forgotten man of British Improv. Live sightings are very rare these days, although he did appear at this year's Freedom Of The City festival, where he was described by a fellow musician as "looking for all the world like a timid little mouse". Recordings are just as rare, amounting to a couple more solo outings on Emanem and a clutch of discs with The Spontaneous Music Ensemble.

Working as a lecturer and guitar tutor, he returns to his flat, sleeps evenings, and then plays late nights and early mornings. Collated from several hours of DAT recordings made in his kitchen, it's no surprise that his music is quietly intense and totally acoustic, played on a finger-plucked Spanish guitar. The resulting album is sparsely beautiful, highly disciplined and intrinsically profound.

Not too many Improv guitarists work exclusively with the Spanish guitar, meaning Smith more or less has the field to himself. He has a confident understanding of the instrument's sonorities, bringing these qualities to the fore in his improvisations. Because the plucked nylon string does not have such lasting resonance as its steel cousin, Smith's approach is to highlight the percussive quality of the struck note. With such a quick decay, his pieces have a taut, staccato feel which he offsets against the more tolling tones available from his steel-wound bass strings. He occasionally uses an arpeggio technique, while "Waltz With Heating" evidences a fondness for harmonics. On "Strange Interlude", he deadens the strings to produce a dampened tone. In all, this is highly individual playing.

There are three lengthy improvisations on show here, interspersed with short, one or two minute vignettes and longer sketches of six to eight minutes. "Extended Ploy", "Diminuendo & Crescendo In Green" and "The Last Of The Season" are all concise and masterful exercises in building structure with extended technique. Here, strings are plucked, pushed, pulled, stroked, oscillated, tapped, distorted and scratched to create falling or toppling cadences, sounds and textures.

His compositional use of space is especially telling in those instances where he lets a plucked harmonic decay completely before filling the void. Playing quietly does not preclude playing with intensity. His pieces are tightly focused, and he is not averse to using syncopation to motivate a part, which he might abruptly terminate or interweave with non-linear note clusters.

In all, Smith is a complete guitarist, both technically and emotionally. If his penchant for anonymity is the key to producing such fine work, let's hope he stays out of sight for a few more years yet.

TAKU SUGIMOTO
TORI
OFFSITE001 CD

SUGIMOTO/EZAKI/UNAMI
TRIO AT OFFSITE
HIBARI MUSIC HIBARI01 CD

OTOMO/ROWE/SUGIMOTO
AJAR
ALCOHOL ALORS1 CD

AKIYAMA/SUGIMOTO/WIGET
HOKOU
CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES036 CD

BY PHIL ENGLAND

At a recent concert in London, Taku Sugimoto played almost as many notes as there were minutes in his 45 minute set. 50 years after John Cage's 'silent' composition *4'33"*, the confrontation with silence can still pack a punch as a radical artistic gesture. It strips us of our defences, leaves nowhere for us to hide. We are here together in this space, with our own shufflings and extraneous noise as much the object of our attention as the performance itself.

Tori is a recorded example of Sugimoto's performance-inverting negative presence, documenting four short performances at Tokyo's Offsite. We take it on trust that he is not a prankster presenting the emperor's new clothes and that his intentions are good. There is an indistinct, haphazard quality to his gestures – clipped, muffled softly plucked notes, wire run through the strings, a closed guitar case hit with a contact mic, etc – yet, tellingly, they are offered without affectation and framed in a reverent silence.

Trio At Offsite teams Sugimoto with micro-trumpeter Masafumi Ezaki and Taku Unami's stereo digital crackle in a sparse, unhurried procession of non-melodic gestures. There's not enough silence to invest the gestures with meaning, and nothing else here moves it beyond the oddly cold and astringent.

With *Ajar*, Sugimoto moves from senior to junior partner in a trio with AMM guitarist Keith Rowe and Otomo Yoshihide. On this studio date, all three are credited with playing 'guitars' but we can assume that Sugimoto provides the softly muffled chimes (his padded beater gently hammering harmonics from his semi acoustic), Rowe the romantically crackle-infested bursts of radio that underpin the proceedings, and Otomo the abstract and distant rumblings. Paradoxically, things get interesting about 15 minutes in, when Rowe pulls back and lets the backdrop of radio give way to an emptier terrain. The mood is twilit and we wait for the angels to pass. Plucked single notes decay as feedback gently rises and falls. In the ten minute closer, "The Room", Sugimoto leads with Morton Feldman-like note drops while Rowe and Otomo recede into the silences, creating shadows, playing with light.

Hokou is perhaps the most human sounding and busiest of the sets here. The playing is largely simultaneous and parallel, but not entirely independent. Guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama matches Sugimoto's slippery, sidelong anti-melodic sense, while cellist Bo Wiget meets them halfway by largely avoiding bowed melodic lines, instead deploying harmonics, drones and pizzicato runs. Divided into ten short pieces, the structure is episodic, encouraging the performers to take a variety of approaches to prevent things from getting stale. That this was recorded in 1999 – before Sugimoto had reached his current pared down method – may explain the greater variety in his playing.

AKIO SUZUKI
ODDS AND ENDS
HOREN MIMI 012/13 2XCD

BY CLIVE BELL

Watching Akio Suzuki knock a couple of small stones together during a London concert last February (reviewed in *The Wire* 218) was an object lesson in how to get a lot out of very little. His focus in performing was so acute that he bound together the entire audience in a kind of magical, ritual listening. And yet it was such an innocent, playful ritual. No tricks, no effects, just a sense of discovery: yes, stone sounds like that, I never noticed before.

It probably doesn't hurt that Suzuki comes from a family of Shinto priests, Shinto being the ancient Japanese religion focused on purity, sense of place and simple materials like water and paper. Suzuki's work as instrument maker, composer and improvisor is founded on listening – listening to nature, to the properties of materials and to special places. The first piece on this career retrospective double CD takes its cue from the 'Roaring Dragon' Hall in Nikko, Japan. Visitors clap their hands beneath a ceiling painting of a dragon, which roars in reply. Suzuki built two parallel walls of sundried brick to produce a special echo. Within it he plays his invention, the Analapos, a long, reverberant spring which can be stroked, struck or sung into

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Christina Kubisch

Whether riding an adrenalin wave of transgression or the exuberance of communal celebration, **Ground-Zero**'s *Plays Standards* (ReR Megacorp RERGZ3 CD) is the sound of the energy of change. Originally released five years ago by Japanese label Nani Records, it is one of the group's twin peaks, next to the apocalyptic *Consume Red*. *Standards* is group leader Otomo Yoshihide integrating his past and propelling himself into the future. As Otomo outlines in his sleevenotes, the album is in part an attempt to bridge the gap between his melodic film soundtracks and the Zorn-like 'cut-up' methods of early Ground-Zero. But the chosen 'standards' also pay homage to his influences: a diverse bunch including Russian pop circus visionary Sergey Kuryokhin, murdered Chilean revolutionary songwriter Victor Jara, and Steve Beresford's iconoclastic 'Improv in the bath'. There's also Otomo and Kazuhisa Uchihashi's guitar duo tribute to deceased Jap improv legend, Kaoru Abe. But most pieces unleash the full force of the consummate double quartet incarnation of Ground-Zero, captured at the height of their powers a year before Otomo terminated the project. "Those Were The Days" is given extra frisson by integrating a version by Kuryokhin and Keshavan Maslak that alludes to a changing Soviet Union, prologued by an Otomo turntable solo of Varèse-like orchestral percussion drama, a Japanese children's cartoon theme from his pre-school days undergoes a Naked City-like reworking, and the group push the controlled energy burst of Massacre's "Bones" into a frenzied Boredoms freakout. Part recombination, part deconstruction, part destruction, part reconstruction, *Standards* adds up to one full quotient of Joyful Noise. (PE)

Hidden behind a name made up of three symbols representing a circle, a triangle and a square, Japanese performance group **Maru-Sankaku-Shikaku** were so far underground they were almost invisible. Founded in 1970 by Sakuro Watanabe, a street performer, musician and private magazine publisher, they took to the streets, performing in pedestrian precincts to baffled onlookers throughout Japan, camping out in tents and sleeping bags. Before they split up in 1973, they also found time to release five recordings of their improvised performances, all pressed up in minuscule quantities, all of which have long since disappeared. The triple set *Maru-Sankaku-Shikaku* (Captain Trip CTCD362364 3XCD) has been cut directly from original vinyl copies. No attempt has been made to clean up the scratches that crackle through the three discs, as they ramble on without really getting anywhere. Comparisons have been made with Taj Mahal Travellers and UK hippy drone unit The Third Ear Band, but MSS's improvisations are too ramshackle, loose fitting and directionless to stack them next to either group. If the first two discs are something of an ordeal, it's worth pressing on for the final hump. By far the most rewarding, it features a Yoko Ono-style vocal wailing over an assorted collection of instrumental clutter that ineptly, but amusingly, tries to keep up with the singer's primal screaming and gibbon whooping. In the final analysis, this reissue has more historical interest than musical excitement, while fans of Tokyo cult group Friction should note that its members Chiko Hige and Reck rose up through the ranks of Maru-Sankaku-Shikaku. (EP)

Negativland's infamous copyright-affronting 1991 "U2" single was not, as frequently assumed, about trashing Bono and the boys. The initial inspiration was an industry outtake of US Top 40 host Casey Kasem cussing and cursing. In fact, in Negativland's exhaustive but hugely entertaining documentation of the shenanigans that followed, *Fair Use* (including a CD featuring Crosley Bendix's wonderful discussion of the US Copyright Act), U2 emerge with their reputation intact, having put pressure on Island Records not to press for payment of the out of court settlement. Where the mud sticks is on the faces of Island, Kasem and SST's Gregg Ginn (Negativland's label boss at the time). The only people who gained anything were lawyers, and Negativland were left to rebuild their fortunes from scratch by reviving their own record label.

Now things seem to have settled down or moved on. The industry has other fish like Napster to worry about. The only party that is still blocking an official reissue of "U2" is Kasem, which brings us to *These Guys Are From England And Who Gives A Shit* (Seeland (sic) D21 CD). Besides containing the original suppressed "U2", *These Guys...* collects a number of versions of the two songs from the original EP along with material relating to the case from Negativland's 1993 Music For Lawyers tour of the US. The CD opens with the original chaotic, slightly juvenile live radio improvisation in which the piece had its genesis. There are two versions of "Long Distance Dedication", including a live reworking which complicates and fractures the already dense piece by working in extra related found sound and musical material. The additional live material spins outside copyright territory to examine the possibility that the U2 spy plane which was supposedly shot down by the USSR in 1960 was in fact blown up by the CIA to sabotage a conciliatory meeting between the US and Russia some weeks later. All the different versions mean the gags come more than once, and this exhaustive release is really only for completists – or anyone left who hasn't already downloaded it in digital format or bought it as a cheap cassette from the Copyright Violation Squad. (PE)

The formidable bass/piano/violin trio of **Barry Guy**, **Howard Riley** and **Philipp Wachsmann** recorded *Improvisations Are Forever Now* (Emanem 4D7D CD), first issued on vinyl in 1978. It remains an intense listening experience, profound commitment to collective improvising and an earnest form of excitement seep from every particle of sound they generate. Guy and Wachsmann amplify their strings and use electronics; Riley mines the piano with characteristic concentration and articulate cragginess. Even when sparse and quiet, the tension of shared singlemindedness spills from the music. The reissue additionally offers three extremely fine pieces from 1979 that bear the same hallmark of seriousness of purpose enlivened by creative vitality. (JC)

Open to extravagance, unphased by conceptual art excess, the Italian Cramps label assembled a catalogue of wonders during the 1970s, and Ampersand's mining of that archive of exploratory sounds continues to redraw the map of known music. Berlin based artist **Christina Kubisch** is now widely acclaimed for her sound and visual installations (see *The Wire* 212). In 1979, with Italian video artist **Fabrizio Plessi**, she made *Tempo Liquido* (Ampersand AMPERE1D CD), a 42 minute dip into musical eternity, combined in performance with slides, films and live action involving water and glass. The piece was conceived as without beginning or end, and used loops that recur in potentially interminable cycles. It was realised using steel drum, a child's carillon, sho (a Japanese mouth organ) and an amplified glass sheet rubbed in circular motion with metal thimbles. The result is absorbing and lively, with hypnosis kept at bay by the abrasive noise of those thimbles on glass.

Horacio Vaggione was born in Argentina and studied there before moving to Spain where he worked with Luis De Pablo in the Alea electroacoustic music group and with Walter Marchetti and other members of the Cagean ensemble Zaj. He then made his way to Paris and developed a kind of multi-layered modal synthesizer music, a particularly vibrant form of primal electronica. *La Maquina De Cantar* (Ampersand AMPERE11 CD), from 1978, was made in Milan and produced by Marchetti. The first piece chums and bubbles and should appeal to enthusiasts of Terry Riley's *A Rainbow In Curved Air*. The second piece, on which he is joined by Elizabeth Wiener, is tinged with Prog rock grandiosity, but they push it far enough out to carry conviction and even to salvage those lurid sonorities for your continued listening pleasure. (JC)

In November 1974, **Ustad Mohammad Omar**, a classical musician from Afghanistan, travelled to the University of Washington to give the sole American recital of his career. There he was met by Indian tabla prodigy Zakir Hussain, who would later join the school's music faculty. The two performed a single concert together with minimal rehearsal, and with only the music itself as a lingua franca (neither performer was conversant in any of the languages spoken by the other). While below the radar at the time for any but a few Western listeners interested in Middle Eastern music, the concert tape soon became a coveted bootleg, sought by fans of Afghani and Hindustani classical forms. Now finally given a legitimate release, *Virtuoso From Afghanistan* (Smithsonian Folkways 4D439 CD) also represents a return to the label responsible for the first Western release of a recording by the rabab (Afghani plucked lute) virtuoso – *Music Of Afghanistan*, which appeared in 1961 under the auspices of Folkways founder Moses Asch, and featured a rabab solo by Ustad Omar. *Virtuoso From Afghanistan* is a spur to further research for interested parties.

The rabab is a fretless lute with a sizeable complement of sympathetic strings. (In the course of the performance heard here, Ustad Mohammad Omar plays with sufficient fury to snap a string at one point; a trouper, he improvises seamlessly around the mishap.) Its timbre resembles something like the musical equivalent of ancient manuscript paper, delicate and crumbling, yet rife with secrets to be deciphered. Ustad Omar's articulation of classical melodies here depends upon nimble plucking of polyrhythmic phrases, eschewing the pitchbending associated with Northern India's classical canon. The intrinsic transparency of Ustad Omar's tone works against him, however, once the tabla joins the fray. Though perfectly in sync with the rhythmic needs of this master musician, Zakir Hussain's drumming occasionally obscures the subtleties of the Afghani musician's performance. Minor imbalances of this sort do little to detract from an otherwise fascinating transcription of a one-off concert: lightning captured in a jar. (RH) ☐ Reviewed by *Julian Cowley*, *Phil England*, *Richard Henderson* and *Edwin Pouncey*

PHOTO: SEBASTIAN MAYER

Later we hear the same instrument played by the wind. The cries of autumn insects are the trigger for "Als-ob", in which four tape decks share a single long loop of tape. Suzuki's plangent flute sounds on the tape, coaxed in fact from beer bottles, build up to an extraordinary ensemble music which recalls gagaku, the tenth century court orchestra.

"It is people like Akio Suzuki whom I can respect as composers," writes composer Joji Yuasa in the sleevenotes (other ringing endorsements come from Jim O'Rourke, Yamatsuka Eye and David Toop). Suzuki offers a challenging model of the composer, involving humility, a childlike sense of play and profound attention to the natural world. You're not likely to find him premiering a new opera in Munich, then. Suzuki spends most of his time in a remote spot near Kyoto, satisfyingly named Tango. Here he created a piece for The Berlin Ensemble Zwischentone by cutting four harmonic reed flutes with no fingerholes from the lake. He played each flute part near a waterfall, and the resultant multitracked piece closes the album.

If you listen to nature, maybe it will listen back to you. "Ha Go Ro Mo" is a beautiful recording of Suzuki playing a kind of glass harmonica of suspended tubes. In Holland he found that birds outside his window were mimicking the instrument, so he rechristened it 'Koolmees' in their honour. In "Howling Object" Suzuki gets close to the work of American experimental composer Alvin Lucier, manipulating feedback from microphones inside rolls of thick black paper. On "Plate Juggling" he plays a minimalist game, running between three portable record players, and we can hear the audience's amusement, but more often his work is completely acoustic. It's not all slow and meditative – "Blue From Gold" is Suzuki on piano, his hands rolling and dancing on the instrument as he converts the physical movement of action painting into music. And "Ha Cha Me Cha" is wonderfully torrential drumming, where he sounds like a one man bamboo gamelan, as he lets rip in the Firefly Cage, the name he has given his home studio.

RICHARD TEITELBAUM
BLENDS
NEW ALBION NA118 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Like Frederic Rzewski and Alvin Curran, synthesizer player and composer Richard Teitelbaum emerged from the Improv collective Musica Elettronica Viva in the early 70s, his creative palette refreshed and his compositional imagination largely unimpaired by Western preoccupations. His group World Band defined a musical space in which instrumentalists from different cultures could improvise together. Towards the end of that decade, he spent an intensive period studying the shakuhachi with its leading guru Katsuya Yokoyama.

Throughout this period Teitelbaum steeped himself in Japanese culture and in the performance traditions of the shakuhachi. *Blends* is the compositional result. However I beg to differ about that title – the success of the project is precisely that the diverse cultural strands *don't* blend into a compromised, homogenised whole. Instead, the musicians all retain their individual personality as Teitelbaum's composed settings tease the best out of them. *Blends* itself was written in 1977 and provokes a taut dialogue between the gossamer sounds of Yokoyama's shakuhachi and Teitelbaum's sensitive synthesizer accompaniments. The opening creates gentle harmonic interference from the subtle difference in tuning between the two instruments, and then the music opens into more rhythmic and muscular territory. Throughout, tabla player and percussionist Trilok Gurtu adds understated rhythmic poise. The performance justifies Teitelbaum's aspiration that the music should stand as "a metaphor for the recent history of the Japanese people overcoming their past xenophobic isolationism, adopting and adapting other world cultures and technologies ... while still trying to maintain their own distinctly Japanese identity".

If *Kyotaku/Denshi* from 1995 is less of a success, it is due to its rather unwieldy programmatic structure, but there's still much to enjoy. The piece traces the history of the shakuhachi from its mythical origins in ancient China to its reinvention in modern day Japan, and unfolds in four distinct sections. The bell sounds that open the first section are beautifully spacious and resonant, and represent the Chinese Tang dynasty Zen Priest Fuke-Zenji, who is considered to be the first shakuhachi master. At the other end of the historical scale, Mark Dresser and Gerry Hemingway make a brief appearance to recall the sounds of modern Japanese pop and karaoke. Kitsch is just around the corner, but Yokoyama rescues the moment with a coda of pure poetry.

THE TREEHOUSE PROJECT
THE PICTURE SHOW
482 MUSIC 4821008 3XCD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

In his brilliant novel *Aberration Of Starlight* (1980), Gilbert Sorrentino observes that "photographs, because they exclude everything except the split second in which they are taken, always lie. Still, one stares at them, urging them to give up their truths." Michael Reed, director of Chicago's Emerging Improvisers Organization and prime mover of The Treehouse Project, has been doing his share of staring and urging. He conceives *The Picture Show* as a set of improvised wordless stories woven around old photos. For "Prologue: Cameo Frame", he selected six images, created a brief theme for each and allocated it to a single instrument. The musicians then manoeuvred around the lead instrument in order to draw the story from the picture. Reed and bassist Matt Thompson, who has played with saxophonists Ira Sullivan and Von Freeman, mark out time with some ingenuity. Jonathan Doyle improvises melodically on tenor sax and clarinet, sturdy and gnarled on the former, smooth and wistful on the latter, dropping plentiful hints of his extensive engagement with rootsy music, including work with The Wabash Jug Band. Ken Champion makes full use of the pedal steel guitar's aptitude for swing and swoon, but he's an associate of Jim O'Rourke and is equipped to venture out from the music's melodic heartland when necessary.

"The Picture Show", centrepiece of the triptych, comprises pieces penned by Reed to tease truths from a further selection of photographs. Here the group is augmented by guitarist Colin Bunn with additional help from guests John Poston on banjo, pianist Brian Anderson, trumpeter Nate Walcott and Lisa Shrag on harp. Rock, R&B, folk and bebop memories filter through. Bunn demonstrates expressive versatility and in this musically expanded context Doyle and Champion display the breadth of their combined ability to evoke mood and feeling.

Reed's pieces were conceived as wordless songs. On the concluding disc, "Epilogue: Last Words", actual pop songs take the place of photos as repositories of the past and its emotions. Lyrics are consigned to print on the sleeve while the quintet seek ways to preserve their meaning and impact. Pete Brown's words are dropped from Cream's "Politician". "Just A Little Loving" is adapted from Dusty Springfield's Memphis album and records by Ray Charles, Ron Sexsmith, Crosby, Stills & Nash and The Handsome Family are also plundered. It's a neat concept based on standard jazz practice but, arguably, interest wanes a little as the project draws to a close. A three CD package may seem extravagant. *The Picture Show* actually offers around an hour and a half of music, well-conceived and played with conviction.

MAHMOUD TURKMANI
FAYKA
ENJA ENJ9447 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

In the context of recent World Music fusions, this recording by guitarist and oud player Turkmani stands out as rather unusual. Like Rabih Abou-Khalil, Turkmani was born in Lebanon, in 1964. But where Abou-Khalil's *Cactus Of Knowledge* is immensely engaging fun, Turkmani puts the Arabic improvising tradition of Taqsim to his own serious compositional ends, in a synthesis with Western models of improvisation. He studied classical guitar and composition in Moscow, and discovered flamenco, bizarrely, while living in Switzerland. He began composing for the guitar and, since 1998, for the oud, the Arabic lute. Compositions from 1996-99 appeared on his previous CD *Nuqta*.

On *Fayka* Turkmani, playing guitar and oud, brings the story up to date. It features three duets with Iranian percussionist Keyvan Chemirani, who plays the zarb and the big frame drum or daf. Most impressive is "Hkéyét Jidde", with its exultant trills and snakes. Barry Guy's versatility once again amazes, yet a certain neoclassical greyness colours his harmonic spectrum. Turkmani is a brilliant instrumentalist, however, making up for any shortfalls with his unusual and stunning textures.

WIVID
SUMMER SOLSTICE
KLINKER ZOUNDS KZ0206 CD

BY PHIL ENGLAND

The release of WIVID's *Summer Solstice* revives Klinker Club organiser Hugh Metcalfe's previously vinyl-only label with its first release in 14 years. (A Fuck Off Batman CD-R is also doing the rounds at gigs. Recorded live at the stalwart London improvising club on the longest day of last year, the CD documents the only performance by the improvising quartet of Metcalfe, percussionist Will Evans, saxophonist Mike Johns and double bassist David Leahy.

Metcalfe's violin playing will be a surprise for those who know him as a gasmask wearing, potentially violent, dadaist acoustic guitar player. His expressive dexterity is far from amateurish, merging easily with the exploratory group interplay that comprises the opening "Huda". Johns's soprano lends the group sound a weightlessness and Leahy's bass underpins and provokes it with using a range of strategies. Evans's percussion – which consists of material detritus mounted on springs – emphasises imprecision and loosening of control. But perhaps because the microphone placement hasn't favoured him, the rest of the group provide as much percussive interest.

The soprano dances and sings above it all, foregrounded in the mix with a little reverb, like a more melodious Evan Parker, raising the spiritual bar with flights and flurries of notes. There is grit too, with bass and violin ratcheting up the tension. At maximum intensity the group fire off in all directions. But Johns is not so interested in textural interplay. At times he seems a little distant from the others. Consequently, Metcalfe becomes increasing playful and provocative. On the final piece he takes to acoustic guitar. His disruptive antics go ignored, however, as sax and double bass tune in more intensely to each other. All part of the negotiation essential to group improvisation.

O/R
VARIED
12K 1018 CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Stereophonically distributed rhythmic clicks are a familiar sound in the world of glitch. Once they provided an ironic commentary on analogue recordings: digital perfection reproducing the crackle content of dodgy vinyl and employing it as a rhythmic resource. Elevating the status of the flaws of music reproduction over music itself was tongue-in-cheek iconoclasm, and that, coupled with a return to musical fundamentals, made for a stripped down soundworld that was strangely familiar but fundamentally strange.

Nowadays such methods can come over as cliched tiresome. But O/r – Nosei Sakata (trading under the moniker *O, which means 'multiplied by zero', ie nothing) and Richard Chartier – create a largely abstract music which avoids traps set by familiarity. Chartier's lower case electronic compositions have been heard on a number of labels including trente oiseaux, Meme and Fallt. He's the co-founder, with Taylor Deupree, of LINE (sister label to Deupree's 12k), whose products are described as "digital, conceptual, minimalist sound art". Not just music, then. Should we listen to *Varied* with an altered mindset because it's sound art? Are the aesthetics different, or just the terms of reference? Here, with Sakata, Chartier uses rhythm to a greater degree than on his solo recordings, although the results are far from motoric. And despite Sakata's solo work being described as "computerised anti-music" exploring "the conceptual aspect of implied silence", this collaborative effort is extremely musical. It makes telling use of space rather than silence – implied or otherwise.

The CD's nine pieces, all entitled *Varied*, might constitute a suite, but it's not a cohesive one, like the title suggests. Yet it works particularly well on shuffle play, in which the spaces around sound events are fractionally reconfigured. As the narrative possibilities increase, they become ever more elusive. □

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

THE DURUTTI COLUMN
RETURN OF THE SPORADIC RECORDINGS
KOOKY KOOKYDISC018 2XCD

This release pairs up the original *Sporadic Recordings* collection from 1990 with a new selection of archive material, including previously unreleased home recordings. Vini Reilly has always pursued a singular path. Despite being one of Factory's first signings, his Durutti Column never really gelled with a perceived Manchester scene. These recordings showcase his idiosyncratic style, where an overlapping, echoing Ambient wash of guitar with neo-classical flourishes, are bolstered by samples, such as the choral backing on "Silent Nite". The various musical detours taken along the way with mixed success reflect the non-homogeneous nature of *Sporadic Recordings*, its flow interrupted by some undistinguished electronica. If its length and unevenness are likely to limit its appeal to confirmed Durutti enthusiasts and collectors, there is still some fine material here.

DYMAXION
DYMAXION X 4 + 3 = 38.33
DUOPHONIC SUPER 45S DS3329 CD

Between 1995-98, Jeremy Novak and Claudia Newell released four 7" EPs of scratchy, kinetic instrumentals. Collected here they sound like eccentric miniatures, short bursts of inventiveness combining kitsch and experimentalism, with twanging, Duane Eddy-style guitar mixing it with oompah brass, or low-end Sly Stone grooves merging with sci-fi interludes. Frequently the 'space age' sounds of the Joe Meek era are exhumed and applied to angled structures, while occasional sampled breakbeats or riffs keep up a taunting flirtation with normality. They press a different riot of samples into the service of a skewed pop cover. The Fall's "US BDs 9Ds" of with the original lyrics recited in vintage broadcasting English. In the end it all sounds just a little too self-congratulatory, but taken in small doses its eccentricities work their charms.

HAIR POLICE
BLOW OUT YOUR BLOOD
FREEDOM FROM FF0172 CD

Whatever music you might associate with Kentucky, it's surely not Hair Police. Their mass of overdriven white noise always sounds like it's in the process of collapsing noisily around them. Stuttering bursts of electronic distortion, detuned guitar riffs and whiny, indecipherable vocals buried under layers of fuzzy distortion amount to a kind of anti-performance. This demolition job extends to a long 21 minutes that reveal little more than the inward directed fascination of a child torturing insects. The CD is housed in a cardboard sleeve with a soft, felt insert to preserve it from scratches. Wimps.

THE HEADS
UNDER SIDED
SWEET NOTHING SN011 CD

Heads down, no nonsense, primitivist psych rock from this Bristol power trio. Inevitably their wah-wah riffs and blanked out vocals recall The Stooges' first album, but even so The Heads channel a fair deal of contemporary energy into their singleminded pursuit of heaviness. At their most thunderous, they connect The Stooges with *Sister*-era Sonic Youth, on a level of brute force, at least, if not period trappings. For one, their ranting about needing "energy" rings a false note, similar to Spacemen 3 preaching "revolution". The Heads are about the pleasure of the expected, from the solarised sleeve design to the closing freakout of "Heavy Sea", which peaks on some zonked out headbanging.

I AM SPARTACUS
FORWARD!
GRINGO WAAT012 CD

Despite a name that qualifies them for the Crap Band Names chart periodically published in *The Wire*, not to mention the audacious self-mythologising gone into an album that some already speak about like it was a great, long lost recording, *Forward* is an elegant, often beautiful disc from a Nottingham collective who originally recorded it in 1998. Like a more restrained Godspeed You Black Emperor!, I Am Spartacus produce slow, dramatic instrumentals that unfold gracefully. Conjuring a burgeoning sense of melancholy, Tianna Kennedy's cello plays a key role. Sometimes she assails her mentor with a drone-like intensity, elsewhere she provides melodic counterpoint. Together they build tracks from sparse beginnings. More crucially, the group uncannily sense when to hold back. They show restraint even as the music peaks. When they music occasionally breaks free from this nebulous control, the effect is riveting.

INTERPOL
INTERPOL EP
MATADOR OLE546 CD

Interpol's self-titled EP is more interesting for what it represents than what it actually sounds like. Coming out of New York, they are apparently being spoken about in the kind of hushed tones usually reserved for The Strokes, ARE Weapons and their ilk. To these ears, they sound like an unholy amalgam of Bauhaus and Joy Division. Either they're one more nail in the coffin in rock's failing grand narrative, or they're another looping detour. Their accomplished but empty synthesis of styles evokes an era ripe for plundering, what with its cycles of derivation getting shorter. It's all very well aping the cavernous rhythms and sonorous vocals of Joy Division but not if you can't get down their claustrophobic intensity.

MARINEVILLE
READY FOR THE DANCE
OAK PARK OAK001 CD

The debut from this Wellington, New Zealand based trio starts off sounding like The Go-Betweens crossed with Tom Verlaine. But Manneville soon reveal a moodier, freeform look. Combining brittle dissonance with expansive noise crescendos, Manneville's *Excursions* privileges raw sound above song. Their prominent, ragged guitars rip through loose recitations and opaque musings, first amassing and then releasing vivid, intense bursts of energy. If they're selfconsciously epic at times, the tendency is offset by a pleasingly rough edge. Meanwhile, they leave themselves plenty of room to experiment. A promising start.

THE NAYSAYER
HEAVEN, HELL, OR HOUSTON
CARROT TOP SAKI032 CD

Despite a sleeve that playfully evokes Western imagery, and the guesting of Freakwater's Wink D'Bannon on a couple of tracks, the second album from this Texan female trio has more in common with the concise songs of Liz Phair and Barbara Manning than roots based, alt Country stylists. Built around the songs of Anna Padget, The Naysayer's sparse arrangements highlight Padget's confessional lyrics, which are sung with a measured, almost deadpan delivery. The album falters a little in its final third, when the trio's compact, modernist snap gives way to whimsical genre parodies or unconvincing ballads.

OXES
OXXXES
MONITOR MON012 CD

Rejecting the stultifying earnestness often associated with tricky guitar instrumental combos, Baltimore's Oxes gleefully spike their frenzied, riff based music with humorous musical asides that happily fall short of studied wackiness. Playfully appropriating Metal's riffs and rules, the group also incorporate its climactic stadium rock crescendos midway into their explosive workouts. At odds with the disciplinarian reputation of math rock, Oxes sound rough around the edges, if not actually sloppy. Underpinning this is an understanding that, sooner or later, genre labels become meaningless. Further, a degree of progress and individuality can best be achieved by taking inspiration from anywhere you fancy. Oxes dip in to their box of tricks for music that isn't particularly clever, but it does have a vital spark and enough solid gristle to keep the trickiest air guitarist happy.

PIANO MAGIC
WRITERS WITHOUT HOMES
4AD CAD2209 CD

Seeing how Piano Magic have sounded like they should have been on 4AD, even when they were releasing albums on a succession of different independent labels, Glen Johnson's eclectic collective finally reach their spiritual home. Comparisons with This Mortal Coil are inevitable, given Piano Magic's openly poetic, sometimes grandiose approach to music. Often their ambitions were about daring to fail, risking sinking their own music sink under the weight of its pretensions. *Writers Without Homes* is, however, a relatively subdued affair. For every strident drama – the Gothic "(Music Won't Save You From Anything But) Silence", the melodramatic "The Season Is Long" – there are small instrumental interludes, music box melodies and Ambient doodles. However, the mood generally remains sombre while their musical narratives stay fragile, ghostly, deliberately insubstantial. If this gives the album a vaguely intriguing air, it lacks something crucial at its centre: definition, precisely.

CHRIS SMITH
MAP ENDS 1995-2001
EMPEROR JONES ES47 CD

Compiling tracks from Chris Smith's album, *Replacement*, first released in Australia in 1999, along with some newer songs, *Map Ends* documents the Melbourne guitarist's work following his shift from noise pop to more abstract white noise and drone-based compositions. The four tracks from the *Replacement* album are the most striking, with the title piece peeling off searing sheets of distorted guitar noise and blissed out static. The music here sounds like it has no end or beginning, existing instead in perpetuity. On "Crossing" and "Captain, This Is It", the guitar drones have the reverberating, undulating quality of a wordless chant, which gives the music a kind of devotional feel. But replacing his monomaniacal noise preoccupations with a raft of electronic glitches, samples and ambient field recordings leaves the newer tracks sounding less impressive.

WEIRD WAR
WEIRD WAR
DOMINO WIG110 CD

The results of a collaboration that pitches ex-Royal Trux guitarist Neil Hagerty in with Ian Svenonius and Michelle Mae from The Make-Up are pretty much what you would expect. With Hagerty adding some inventive guitar virtuosity to The Make-Up's testifying, lo-fi funk rock, it all comes across as satisfactorily down and dirty. There are no writing credits here but "Who's Who" and "Berger [sic] And Fries" bear the hallmarks of Hagerty's more concise Trux outings circa *Thank You*, while "Chicago Charlemagne" and "I Live In A Dream" seem like happy offshoots of Svenonius's Arthur Lee fixation. The album doesn't quite go the distanc, for it contains a bit too much ramshackle filler to really sustain it. But somewhere between proselytising and deliberate impenetrability, there are some fine offbeat grooves waiting to bust out all over.

WINDSOR FOR THE DERBY
THE EMOTIONAL RESCUE LP
AESTHETICS AST24 CD

After the departure of Erik D'Brian and Adam Wiltzie, Windsor For The Derby return with a shift in direction which moves them away from minimalist trance rock to pastoral, song-based material. The album WFTD recorded for Michael Gira's Young God label, *Difference And Repetition*, hinted that they were all ready to move off in this direction. Here, however, they've fully embraced acoustic songs but in the process they have ditched the earlier record's mesmerising instrumental passages. The emphasis now is on the delicate interplay between acoustic guitars, and vocals which sound somewhere between Jonathan Donahue and Syd Barrett. Highlights are the whimsical title track, the lazy drawl of "Fall Of 68" and the quietly dramatic "Awkwardness". Only the cyclical patterns of "Mythologies" recall the experimental flow of their earlier incarnation.

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

BROOKS
YOU, ME & US
MANTIS MANTCD003 CD

Andy Brooks is the Brixton/Derby label's newest find, a button pushing youngster with a scant handful of singles for Mantis and DIY His debut full length CD makes clear the link to Atjazz, with whom he collaborates as Lesbonics 101, sharing Atjazz's springy basslines and sprightly harmonies. But Brooks, despite his barely legal birthdate, goes much further back to 80s futurism, echoing Morgan Geist's waxy handclaps and electro patter, as on the electro disco "Dripping In Gold" or "Color Me Bad", featuring TK's sulky vocals – a sexed-up funkster crossed with deliberate naivety "Wandering" illustrates Brooks's debt to Matthew Herbert, and not only because he's recruited Dani Siciliano for vocals – Brooks's frayed rhythms and acoustic filigree are a dead ringer for the prankster sampler's signature chug But the kid's in command of his domain, with a knack for dry funk grooves, woozy basslines and oily chords that have his fingerprints smudged all over them

CHATEAU FLIGHT
REMIXENT
VERSATILE VERCD009 CD

You're more likely to find the credits for Chateau Flight, the Parisian duo of Gilb'r and I Cube, on another artist's B side than on one of their own albums proper, so it's high time they assembled a number of their remixes in one place While a few of the artists reworked here most likely represent commission work – Femi Kuti's "Beng, Beng, Beng" comes to mind – many of the tracks here represent a particularly French take on electronica, hence the inclusion of oddball funk from Psyco On Da Bus, Joakim Lone Octet, Brandy, and even remixes for Pierre Henry and Serge Gainsbourg The latter's "Lola Rastaquouère", surprisingly, is one of the album's highlights a lolling dub roller with Gainsbourg growling like Tikiman The other standouts here, by and large, are the future jazz reworks for 2000 Black's Pavel Kostiuk (Dego McFarlane) Seiji, and P'taah Their mix of the latter's "Flyin' High" in particular brings together the elements that elevate the best examples of future jazz untethered drums, expressionist Rhodes stabs, and a disorienting aura of midnight sunlight

DEPTH CHARGE
ROBOTOMO/HONOUR
DC RECORDINGS DC44 12"

The latest single from J Saul Kane is a lurching electro breaks monster, the kind of record Andrew Weatherall might make if the skunk ran out and the malevolence set in On the title track, a tinnily overdriven bassline offers the only real stability amidst a mess of sqealing lasers, intentionally trainwrecking breaks and digitally disturbed grit As far from posh as you could get, it's closer to a beer-soaked hour spent pounding on arcade games at some shitty seaside resort On the flip, "TK" is a slightly grimmer (but no less funky) mashup of Techstep bombast and Mr Oizo's "Last Night A DJ Saved My Dog"

JOHNNY FIASCO
CYCLES. A MIXED RETROSPECTIVE
BOMBAY BMY CD 108 CD

Ever since it started receiving subsidies from an international consortium of mirrored sunglasses makers, House music has been getting safer, whiter and ever more painfully upscale (That's my theory, anyway – LVMH offers a stern "no comment" regarding any alleged financing of Ibiza-friendly four-beat) But Chicago's Johnny Fiasco has always crafted House tracks that were way too energetic to allow for hollow posturing, and this mixed collection of classic cuts, dating from 1995 to 2001, positively oozes libidinal grooves Fiasco's tracks, never minimal, are fleshed out with flanged horns, rollicking congas and cowbells, and enough high end to harness solar power but they're all built around a core of jacking hi-hats and thumping kick drum What's striking is how leftfield this is, despite Fiasco's rep as a main room jock some of these grooves, like the itchy-scratchy "Cycles", wouldn't be out of place on Playhouse or Classic They're tough enough for hardhead cred, and unabashedly slick with disco sweat

HU VIBRATIONAL
BOONGHEE MUSIC 1
EASTERN DEVELOPMENTS EASTDEV1 CD

Adam Rudolph and Hamid Drake are Hu Vibrational, a rootsy, Afrobeat-inspired project on the new Eastern Developments label founded by Scott Herren (aka Prefuse 73/Savath + Savalas), Peter Rentz and Carlos Niño The two percussionists – Rudolph being a Chicago improvisor and Drake a collaborator of Peter Brötzmann and Pharoah Sanders – bang on thumb pianos, harmonium trap drums, udu drums, batajon and more, turning out a loosely woven rope of spiralling rhythms and undulating drones A bit like Tony Allen's rhythm for the Allenko Brotherhood Ensemble project, it explores intimacy and expansiveness, but the dissonant and slightly mad "Meditation", flecked with gibbering plucked strings shuffles off the relative restraint of the other tracks Dabrye's *Instrmntl*, the Ann Arbor artist's follow up to his debut for Ghostly International, couldn't make for an odder labelmate While it's more acoustic sounding than his previous record – check the flute stabs and handclaps in "Won" – this is still a determinedly Techy production, with fake and fuzzed out bass tones smothering gritty, choppy beats It's actually a significant improvement on the first album, blessed with a richer sound and a broader tonal range And it has the sickest, dirtiest electroacoustic breaks you'll hear on a HipHop record this year

LOWTEC
SECRET CORNER
SOURCE 39 CD/2XLP

Secret Corner opens with a bang, launching into a messy breakbeat stomper pounding out the kind of organ chords that give Moodymann night sweats Lowtec (Jens Kuhns) is a veteran of the ferociously minimalistic Playhouse label, but on this track he's a lot closer to the spastic Garage that Blaze turned out for the Playhouse classic, "Funky People". Oddly, he calms down considerably after the opener, and the duration of the album features track after track of burnished, skittering House beats, accidental syncopations, and augmented chords that soak in like skin cream. "City Limits" pits a crackling, Perlonesque electro-House beat against Ambient drones and choppy funk vocals in the vein of Brinkmann or Akufen "1973" offers dry, gnarled HipHop, "Stomping Ground" layers on blanket after blanket of chords to achieve the illusion of translucence Always drawing on the same palette of textures and tones, every track fits neatly into the whole, but nothing ever fades into the background, making this one of the most coherent, and consistently brilliant Techno full-lengths this year The third Detroit Electronic Music Festival may have been marred by politics, but albums like this prove that the soul of the Motor City is thriving nonetheless

NEW FLESH
LIE LOW
BIG DADA BD041 12"

Who knows why New Flesh – the London trio of Part 2, Toastie Taylor and Juice Aleem – decided not to include "Lie Low" on their recent album, *Understanding*? But who's complaining? Tearing into this sucker feels a little like Christmas in July, with ribbons of glossy keyboards peeling away to reveal a throbbing box brimming with bass Wobblier than Jabba The Hut astride the San Andreas, it offers the optimal soundcheck for subwoofer shoppers everywhere The tho's hoarse chorus, while hardly a brave step forward for HipHop lyricism, is nonetheless perfect for windows-down stoplight taunting Lotek reworks "Zero Gravity" into a breezy (and well stoned) reggae crooner, while "Move Slow", featuring Antipop's Beans, replises a killer electrofunk lurcher from the album

SECRET FREQUENCY CREW
THE UNDERWATER ADVENTURE HOP SECRET TREASURE
COUNTERFLOW CF010 CD/12"

Boards Of Canada may cite old nature programmes as the inspiration behind their crackly, nostalgic beats, but New York's Secret Frequency Crew go one better with this all-out paean to the likes of Jean Michel Jarre and Tomita *The Underwater Adventure Hop Secret Treasure* is a sort of five part song cycle ("Aqua", "Gold", "Deep Blue", "Magenta" and "Sea Green") exploring the otherworldly reaches of the briny deep Instead of Drexciya's dark historical mythology *Underwater* allows brilliant, flanged chords and lush HipHop beats to provide the soundtrack for fantastic abandon At first it all feels a little bogged down in Prog, oversaturated with tone colour and sinking under the weight of its own melodic cargo, but as your ears adjust, the Crew's use of texture – especially on the darkly lumbering "Deep Blue" – brings it back afloat. Eli-173 turns in an even more Boards-like remix of the latter track scraped with skittering breaks and sonar strafings, while Antipop Consortium beat it relentlessly against the rocks until it's as limp and rubbery as a flogged octopus

THEOREM
THX: EXPERIMENTS IN SYNCHRONICITY
MINUS MINUS10 CD

NIEDERFLUR
ND4
MINUS MINUS11 CD

I've found myself increasingly burned out on 4/4 beats lately, though I can't say whether it's out of impatience with an ossifying genre, or simply the short attention span that craves a breakbeat after too many BOB kicks, and vice versa But these two full lengths on Minus – Windsor, Ontario's temple of boom boom boom-boom – prove that minimal Techno's got a healthy pulse yet Niederflur, the Cologne duo of Hannes Wenner and Christopher Klos, layer thudding kicks, crystalline ticks and the faintest splash of tone colour in familiar fashion, but their sluggish beats are an intriguingly slothful variation on Techno's normally propulsive form In place of Niederflur's desiccated landscape, Theorem (Dale Lawrence) and collaborators Swayzak, Sutekh and Stewart Walker harvest field after field of verdant chords and succulent melodies It doesn't matter that the essential structure is the same as every other minimal Techno jam since the beginning of time, because the songwriting's so damn strong, even when the only movement is found in a single chord's infinite filtered permutations. Theorem and Walker's "Too Distant Images" is still one of the sexiest examples the genre has to offer, as sultry as anything Luomo ever built out of coos and sighs.

VARIOUS
DJ ZINC PRESENTS: BINGO BEATS VOL 2 – MIXED BY ZED BIAS
BINGO BINGOCD02 CD

Zed Bias – aka Dave Jones, who records under the appropriate alias Maddslinky for Sirkus – plays selector for the second mix CD on DJ Zinc's breakstep label, Bingo Beats Especially for the vinyl-challenged, there may be no better introduction to the current state of darkside Garage the mix is thick with sinister bottom heavy tracks from Jammin (Zinc), Ras Kwame, and Darqwan, representing labels like Bingo, Soulja, Big Apple, and Sidestepper Leaning heavily on upfront tracks on dubplate, this collection presents a percussive strain of Garage that veers ever closer to the singleminded skeletalism of drum 'n' bass, albeit at that just-a-hair-past-House tempo Maddslinky's "Reasons" kicks things off with a wobbly low end, underwater keys and scattered chipmunk vocal bursts, and for the next hour the disc staggers between this kind of molasses funk and the Runnin label's chunky breakstep Paradoxically, the real action's in the details hiding behind the breaks just check Daluq's shivery bass harmonics, Ras Kwame's airborne vocal divots, and the schizo laugh track that ricochets through Jammin's closing "Tug O' War"

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

JOHNNY CLARKE
A RUFFER VERSION – AT KING TUBBY'S 1974-1978
TROJAN TJA025 CD

DREADER DREAD 1976-1978
SIMPLY VINYL SV369 LP

Trojan continues its cultural rehabilitation under the guiding hand of old time reggae buff Dave Hendley with this selection of Johnny Clarke righteous vocals and groundbreaking Tubby dubs cut for Bunny 'Striker' Lee Clarke pulled an ace when he voiced "None Shall Escape The Judgement" for the producer, as it just happened to be the session where the so-called 'flying cymbal' sound was created by Carlton 'Santa' Davis, with the cymbals driving the rhythm rather than the snare drum The tune was a smash hit in Jamaica and the new sound became almost obligatory overnight This selection opens with four versions of that rhythm which obviously carried well beyond the island, since Jonathan Richman And The Modern Lovers converted the bassline into the melody for their only UK hit "Egyptian Reggae". 22 tracks in all, and plenty of version-laden dubs with Tubby's full array of siren, machine gun and whiplash effects, most notably on the album's title tune Unfortunately no version of the cover of the Philly tune "Peace And Love In The Ghetto", where Tubby keeps things under tight control with one of his most tense mixes. Look out for the 7" single on UK Attack which is relatively easy to find

If the black stuff is your preference, then Simply Vinyl converts the singer's Blood & Fire set into two sizzling pieces Out of the 13 tracks only two are in common with the Trojan set, and one of those is an extended version, meaning that the best of the Clarke's 70s output is virtually covered by these two releases

ANSEL COLLINS WITH SLY & ROBBIE
JAMAICAN GOLD
MOLL SELEKTA 4 CD

Keyboard man Ansel Collins is one of reggae's many invisible protagonists Mainly recognised as brother Dave's partner for their massive "Double Barrel" hit, but less well known for penning the epochal "Stalag" rhythm for producer Winston Riley and as a regular with both The Revolutionaries and Aggrovators German label Moll-Selekta continue their quality reissue programme with this selection of Collins's tunes dating from the late 70s into the 80s dancehall era. It's a mix of vocal, DJ, instrumental and dub with the main contribution from Ansel himself, who comes on in cool Gregory style He's given a helping hand by Roland Burrell, as well as DJs Jah Thomas and Mr Mystic There is no heaviness here the grooves are luscious and lazy, well timed for summer

KING TUBBY
DUB INVENTOR VOL 1 – CITY OF THE WEAKHEART DUB
WHITE LABEL KT01 LP

Only a limited stock of this repress is available The original appeared on the obscure E Saw label in the mid-70s Basically it's Tubby laying his hands on a number of Jacob Miller tunes including some of his hits "Suzie Wong", "Tenement Yard" and "Tired Fe Lick Weed Inna Bush", so the cuts may have been first conceived as dubplates for the dance No brass here, just the rock solid Inner Circle Fatman Riddim Section with the distinguishing feature of an organ sound veering wildly between Sun Ra's R&B style and Johnny And The Hurricanes' "Beatnik Fly" Personally I find if things are that weird then they're a must

MANASSEH
DUB PLATE STYLE 1990-1999
HAMMERBASS BASS008 CD

Nick 'Manasseh' Raphael is a foundation player in the UK roots scene, never afraid to experiment because he has always been able to return to what he does best – as evidenced on this collection of some of his best outings from the 90s It's dubplate style right through the 20 cuts, as rhythms are rubbed, rerubbed and scrubbed down, best witnessed through Natty P's "Skenga 12" Mix", mutating through "Masai Get A Bly", through to "Mind The Gap Version" Other roots vocals from Johnny Osbourne, Earl 16 and Orville Smith provide the basis for a series of timeless dubs which captured the heart of the UK roots scene At times through the last decade there seemed to be the occasional threat that Manasseh's music might get enough support to happen on the wider dance scene, but a breakthrough never arrived and thankfully Nick's still dubbing

RESTLESS MASHAITS
KINGSTON SESSIONS 1992-2002
ADDIS ADDIS01 CD

Recommending a modern roots reggae album with two white Swiss dreads as the main players is not the kind of proposition beyond precedent in this column, but this set possesses instrumentals and dubs so wonderfully fresh that this time recommendation becomes insistence The basic rhythm tracks were recorded in Geneva, and then multitracks were carried to a series of Kingston studios where the likes of hornsmen Dean Fraser, Deadly Headly, Nambo and Chico set to work along with other studio luminaries Bongo Herman, Scully and Dizzy Moore, before mixdown courtesy of Soljie or Bulby The result is a deep, warm sound that's missing from most contemporary reggae of whatever description Many of these tunes were originally released as singles out of Jamaica – another few additions to the wants list then!

THE ROYALS
PICK UP THE PIECES
PRESSURE SOUNDS PS36 CD/LP

THE HEPTONES
COOL RASTA
TROJAN TJA013 CD

Like so many other young Jamaicans, Roy Cousins was apprenticed though the hard schools of Clement Dodd and Duke Reid He continued to record through the 60s and in the 70s self-financed his own label, Tamoki Wambesi, and rerecorded "Pick Up The Pieces", a tune he had first cut at Studio One The song became a massive roots hit and the rhythm has endured countless versioning The subsequent album of the same name now stands alongside contemporary offerings by The Mighty Diamonds, Wailing Souls and Abyssinians as one of the harmony group essentials to have in any self-respecting reggae collection Although that original set has been available on and off over the intervening years, Pressure Sounds gives it the treatment it deserves by the addition of eight bonus tracks on the CD version, along with new artwork and sleevenotes Amongst the extras is "Genuine Way" by none other than Lloyd Ruddock, King Tubby's brother, not just a curiosity but a much sought after roots classic.

Also out of the Brentford Road academy came the mighty Heptones Although "Cool Rasta" was cut for Harry Johnson in the mid-70s, Syd Bucknor, the group's engineer at Studio One, was engaged on mixing duties The result is an album that equals their earlier work as much as the material that would shortly emerge from the Black Ark period Here we have the original meagre ten track album plus nine bonus cuts from the same sessions, including classics "Book Of Rules", "Mama Say" and one that could have been from the pen of Curtis Mayfield himself, "Country Boy" – all replete with dubs The first appearance on CD for this set means another essential purchase for harmony lovers.

RYUKYU UNDERGROUND
RYUKYU UNDERGROUND
RIVERBOAT TUG1028 CD

From previous glimpses of Okinawan music, courtesy of Luaka Bop and other pioneers, there seems to be some unexplainable vortex sucking in and forcing together disparate sound sources Mixtures, or as the Okinawans say, champloo, have been the lifeblood of their music DJ Keith Gordon and musician Jon Taylor had been living in Okinawa for a number of years before they allowed local influences to be expressed again in a dub fusion, an experimentation notoriously difficult to pull off without the joins becoming painfully obvious But this one succeeds in the same way as Wobble's *Molam Dub* – by involving local musicians rather than relying on sample transplants

TWILIGHT CIRCUS DUB SOUND SYSTEM
DUB PLATES VOL 3
M RECORDS 210 CD

Once more into the dub abyss The release of his ninth album coincides with the conclusion of Ryan Moore's world tour for 2002 in his home town of Nijmegen, Holland 11 dubplates – aired only via the sound system – are released commercially here, and basically it's the same reliable formula cranked up to shake the foundations one more time Perhaps the future will find Moore stretching out to bring in some extra textures like brass, vocal or even some abstraction As he has proved such a modern master in the production of proud steppers and raging rockers, maybe it's time to take the fat beats walkies

Electronica

Reviewed by Jerome Maunsell

AUTECHRE
GANTZ GRAF
WARP WAP256 CD + DVD

Rob Brown and Sean Booth continue their lonely mission to squeeze even more mangled shapes out of their machines with this three-track EP and DVD (see Cross Platform, page B1). If their album releases have seen them vertically lifting off into exponentially more and more challenging territory, this at least takes stock of some of the radical advances of last year's *Confield* LP. The title track is a giddy rollercoaster of twisted rhythms and textures that never fully untangle: a congealed mess of stretched and compressed breakbeats spinning in on themselves. "Dial" is a more funky and enjoyable cut of 21st century demonic jazz Techno, with the pitch keeling around in a typically freestyle way. The last cut, "Cap IV", is the standout, sounding like several tracks being fast-forwarded on CD simultaneously, with shards of odd Gothic-sounding vocals, random FX, and hyperactive flickering grooves all competing for space in the mix. Things finally take off towards the end, though, when a simple piano sequence and some melodic analogue chords balance the usual vertigo-inducing sonic vortex.

JAY CLOIDT
DARK MATTER
PHTHALO PH42 CD

MASSACCESI
I NEVER FALL APART BECAUSE I NEVER FALL TOGETHER
PHTHALO PH28 CD

Two releases from the Los Angeles-based Phthalo label showing just how diverse its interests are, roaming from kitschy electronica trashcore to seriously sculpted, intensely gloomy ambience. You can probably guess which is which from the titles alone. Unlike his more cheeky recent *Kat Krush* CD, which was a plunderphonic mash-up of Stravinsky, Beethoven, Eric Clapton and others, Jay Cloidt's *Dark Matter* has an almost oppressive sense of gravitas. It's full of buzzing, ominous, sustained drones, oscillations, and horrorshow synths. Labelmate Massacessi, meanwhile, is gloriously irreverent. Taking its title from a Warhol maxim, *I Never Fall* is a rampant, untamed audio collage. Massacessi also works as a fashion designer, and describes his own sound as "a speeding garbage truck of sounds and fabrics, overturned and scattered". It's a fairly apt metaphor. "The Tawdry Soulessness Of All That's Offered Us Today" glues voices announcing a host of fashion brand names to a department store's automated call centre menu options, snippets of 80s poodle power rock, and dismembered distorted guitars. And that's just for starters.

ICARUS
MISFITS
NO RECORD LABEL NOT002 CD

Following on from last year's *Squid Ink* album on Output Recordings, this is the fourth long player from Ollie Brown and Sam Britton. It's a "minimally arranged mini-LP" which they claim came about essentially from a process of thinking about "improvisation with regard to how this appeared in recorded form". The six meandering tracks here all display a light, nimble musical logic, and have an unusual spareness and freshness to their overall sound and approach. Beats skitter along unpredictably with a general softness of touch and a few sharp edges. The melodies have a huge dynamic range, often tentatively circling around each other before mingling together. On the penultimate number, "Skate Glug", there's the most explicit nod towards jazz, with an extended clarinet solo flying over and around some very fast agile rhythms, featherweight sprinklings of electronics, and some simple chord changes.

IYUNX PRODUCTIONS
HOW TO CREATE AN EXPLOSION
ISOPHLUX ISO022 CD

What with the title of this CD and the instructions on it, "Carefully Open... Prepare for a Taste Explosion in Your Tubes", you might expect something incendiary here. But this debut album from Manchester's Iyunx Productions, released on New York label Isophlux, doesn't really do what it says on the tin. Rather than any revolutionary/reactionary punk electronix, *How To Create An Explosion* offers up several portions of widescreen ambience that often recall early Black Dog. The main focus here seems to be on weaving long, mournful melody lines over plaintive chords, and jumpy beats. We've been here many times before, and there's a sense that Iynux are perhaps a little too ensconsed in the comfort zone for now. Some neat arrangements, all the same.

METAMATICS
FROM DEATH TO PASSWORDS WHERE YOU'RE A PAPER AEROPLANE
HYDROGEN DUKEBOX DUKE 98 CD

Named in homage to UK synth-pop pioneer John Foxx's much underrated *Metamatics* album of 1980, Lee Norris's incarnation as Metamatics has been around since the early 90s, when it started out with a few solid releases on the now sadly defunct Clear label. Originally from Manchester, he's currently living in a cottage on Dartmoor, two miles away from the nearest shop, and says that he only likes to write music when it's rainy and grey. The best moments on this latest album – rain-soaked, hazy daydreams filled with English melancholia – certainly reflect that. Most of them come quite early on the disc. "What The Birds Overheard" fuses an awkward spoken poem trying to get at the essence of lost things everywhere, found "in the patterns that form in the cracks in the pavement" and other neglected places, with broken electronic textures. "Byeway (Clan)", which follows, is the most beautiful thing here, devastatingly pure, whole and uncomplicated.

NAUTILIS
ARE YOU AN AXOLOTL
PLANET MU ZIO050 CD

JOSEPH NOTHING
DREAMLAND IDLE ORCHESTRA
PLANET MU ZIO055 CD

Taking a clever, sideways slant on the concept of generative music, Mike Paradinas's Planet Mu label (like Richard James's Rephlex) often releases product that closely matches his own best work. Joseph Nothing, who also records under the alias Rom=Pan, is apparently from Japan. The first track could be a sequel to Aphex's *Girl/Boy* EP – all soaring strings soaked in huge swathes of reverb – though the album swiftly mutates into a magical mystery tour that takes in C&W punk (yes!), leftfield orchestral pop with hopelessly distorted saccharine vocals and runaway beats, Grunge bass, tiny pastoral idylls filled with exotic rustlings, and other improbable fusions. Nautilis, meanwhile, is one Skyler McGlothlin from Denton, Texas, and his debut full-length recording takes in an equally diverse range of styles, with a slightly more polished, less abrasive production technique throughout. Ambient interludes, a Frank Sinatraesque waltz (with crooning intact), and heavily processed beatboxing all vie for attention here. The clearest stylistic thread running across the record, though, exists somewhere on the faultline between electronica and HipHop.

ANDREW PEKLER
STATION TO STATION
~SCAPE SC11 CD

Andrew Pekler was born in Uzbekistan, and raised in both California and Bavaria. So the travelling theme of this first album under his own name, which was recorded in his new home of Berlin, is more than a little apt. Where the first two Sad Rockets LPs on Source and Matador that he made in his bedroom showcased a dizzy medley of influences that sometimes swirled headily into confusion, *Station To Station* nods more heavily towards the electronic sides of Herbie Hancock and Sun Ra, as well as Berlin's recent dub heritage from the likes of Rhythm And Sound and Pole, on whose reactivated ~scape label this appears. Working with saxophonist Elliott Levin, and Japanese bassist Akira Ando, Pekler fashioned most of these tracks from the edits he took from live improvised sessions. Like Burnt Friedman's recent collaborative project with Can's Jaki Liebezeit, the results are refreshingly loose and organic in feel, wandering from mellow, reflective jazz stylings to equally louche dub basslines, letting some much needed breaths of air into the closed room of electronic music.

JOHN TEJADA
DAYDREAMS IN COLD WEATHER
PLUG RESEARCH PR350203 CD

A slick collection of funky electro, mellow Techno, cutesy analogue bass and lead lines from Los Angeles's frighteningly prolific John Tejada (he's already past the 50 release mark, even though his first album was only released in back 1997). The cover shows a pair of teddy bears relaxing with a *Meet Peter Rabbit* picture book, and in a correspondingly chirpy way, *Daydreams In Cold Weather* maintains a uniformly sprightly tone throughout, with merrily skipping hi-hats ticking away on every offbeat, soft synth splashes all over the canvas, and catchy, if forgettable, melodic motifs generously sprinkled around. Tejada's friend Divine Styler appears for a relaxed guest slot on "The Silence Of Us" towards the end of the set, with *"mathematical abstractions"* turning his *"voice into fractions"*. His sombre lyrical shades add some much-needed darkness to the mix. But there's too little, too late.

TELEFORM
COSINE F
DOMIZIL 16 CD

35 unnamed, ultra-concise shards of electronic sinewaves and other humming disturbances put under an extremely powerful sonic microscope, clocking in at just over half an hour in all. They range from long passages of near silence to fierce, punishingly loud blasts of deconstructed machine noise which seem to get more intense and spiky during the second half of the disc. This is the second album release from Swiss musician Bernd Schurer on the Zurich-based experimental Domizil label, and, intentionally or otherwise, it has an evil sense of humour. You find yourself reaching for the volume control during each prolonged patch of extreme quietness, only to put your speakers (and your nerves) under severe distress when the dynamics suddenly twist out of the blue towards outright digital white noise. It's all intricately managed, no doubt, but this is one for lovers of uncompromising abstraction only.

THE ROGER TUBESOUND ENSEMBLE
PLAYS JUST NOTES
RATHER INTERESTING RI058 CD

"The missing link between Atom Heart and Sun Ra", writes one "Hans Rittzs (Der Programmierer)" on the back of this second CD from the mysterious Roger Tubesound Ensemble, pointing us in a mischievously unsubtle way towards the real origin of *Plays Just Notes*. Since moving to Santiago, Chile from Frankfurt, Uwe Schmidt (aka Atom Heart), has pursued a number of different musical personas, of which this appears to be the latest. Where Señor Coconut rewired Kraftwerk as a Latin group complete with maracas, trumpets and xylophones, Roger Tubesound breaks jazz into millions of little pieces before putting the rapidly tiring genre back together in a startling variety of different new ways. After announcing that "Roger's back...", the disc plunges headfirst into a bewildering stew of traditional and free jazz outtakes pasted together in odd, yet somehow comprehensible rhythms and solos. Even the drum solos sound completely reconfigured. Like the whole of this CD, they marry extraordinary formal novelty to a deep sense of all-round musicality. □

Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

GEVORG DABAGHYAN
MINIATURES: MASTERWORKS FOR ARMENIAN DUDUK
TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS 807024312 CD

THE SHOGHAKEN ENSEMBLE
ARMENIAN ANTHOLOGY
TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS 807024311 CD

Having issued many albums of Turkish and Armenian music over the past decade, label proprietor Harold Hagopian now adds two more defining collections to his blessedly specific catalogue. Both are graced with Hagopian's impeccable production and mastering, and paired with exhaustively researched notes common to all Traditional Crossroads discs. *Armenian Anthology* is a celebration of folk styles "forged .. in the long historical shadow of Mt Ararat", interpreted by the nine members of Gevorg Dabaghyan's Shoghaken Ensemble. The disc opens, as do many recitals of Armenian music, with the shrill plaint of the double-reed zurna set to hand percussion that, in its complexity and propulsion, makes drum 'n' bass seem drab indeed. Moving on through a dizzying array of songs (epic, patriotic, work and wedding), the ensemble dispel any fusty air of revivalism. The 18th century lyric song "Kani Voor Jan Im" is imbued with poignancy and tensile strength, a testament to the music's evergreen qualities.

Miniatures is a showcase for Dabaghyan himself soloing on the duduk flute, whose velvety timbre is familiar from recordings by Djivan Gasparyan. The liners make much of Dabaghyan's versatility, adapting the cane flute to new and unusual applications, such as Armenian liturgical chants. Certainly there are unusually frenetic passages, like the soft spun Aylesins of the folk dance "Shiraki" or the modern composition "I'm Waiting", but those familiar with Gasparyan's torchy vibrato will find much to love — or, more properly, mourn — here. In the larger measure, melody and drone duduks on *Miniatures* are supplemented by the snap and pop of taut-skinned dhol drumming. Though most of these compositions reflect the untempered modes of makam theory common throughout Middle Eastern music, few classical or folk performances from this diaspora resonate with such warmth and unfettered inventiveness.

LOS MONTAÑESES DEL ALAMO
PRIMER GRABACIONES: 1940-1950/FIRST RECORDINGS
ARHOOLIE 7021 CD

Owing to the popularity of European salon music in Mexico during Emperor Maximilian's reign in the 1860s, polkas mixed with habañeros and danzas were gene-spliced with march melodies by a new school of Mexican composers. A group from north east Mexico formed in the 1930s, Los Montañeses Del Alamo took their cue from the genteel styles of an earlier day and parlayed their 19th century fixation into considerable success over a career lasting more than 50 years. It's shocking to consider that, were it not for the their persistence in the face of rebuffs from the larger recording concerns of the day (who didn't want to know about 'musica regional'), this entirely charming music might not have been heard beyond the Sierra Madre Oriental mountains. *First Recordings* contains some two dozen jaunty and dignified settings for flute, violin, string bass and bajo sexto. The set comes with more indispensable scholarship from Arhoolie's Chris Strachowitz, whose detective work brought these sides to light in wonderfully listenable shape.

PAPA NOEL & PAPI OVIEDO
BANA CONGO
TUMI 107 CD

In recent years — and by numerous means — Congolese musicians of a certain age have fought to reclaim the sensuality and grace of classic rumba rock from the machine-driven frenzy that possessed soukous in the 1990s. Sam Mangwana sang over an unclassifiable melange of World Music influences on *Gato Negro*. The phalanx of vocalists comprising Africando set their controls for the heart of New York salsa and created a successful franchise. Now Papa Noel, formerly guitar mainstay of TPOK Jazz and Les Bantous De La Capitale, has hit on the most winning formula to date. Congolese music wouldn't exist, were it not for the postwar input of Cuban stars such as Trio Matamoros and Sexteto Habañera. Wisely, the African star has hooked up with his Cuban contemporary, Papi Oviedo. The sound of the latter's tres (a tiny double-stringed guitar with built-in flanging) was intrinsic to the rustic sophistication of Orchestra Revé's changui stylings. Together, the two sexagenarians create *Bana Congo*, ten songs whose gentle swing and nimble fingerpicking recall Congolese summit meetings held between Franco and Rochereau in the 80s. The impressive cast of vocalists includes Nyboma and Wuta Mayi of Les Quatre Étoiles, Andrés Sosa Revé and Papa Noel on three songs. The backup singers add an I-Threes vibe and the tough horn section is on a par with P18's *Urban Cuban* arrangements. The only disappointment stems from the realisation that the perfect island midway between Kinshasa and Havana, as gleefully suggested here, doesn't exist.

RAJERY
FANAMBY
LABEL BLEU/INDIGO LBLC2572 CD

Germain Randrianansoa, aka Rajery, is a singer-songwriter from Madagascar whose principal axe is his country's national instrument, the tubular harp known as valiha. While his spidery melodies will never be mistaken for the breakneck inventions of Rakotozafy, the Jimi Hendrix of the valiha, Rajery does a commendable job of modernising his country's folk traditions. Not dissimilar from Justin Vali's recordings for Real World in the mid-90s, *Fanamby* pits the young harpist against guitars and percussion, with his sustained harmonies sailing over the galloping beats so readily identified with the Island of Ghosts. Enigmatic and good-natured in the same breath, Malagasy music still exerts a powerful thrall — even when it has been polished to within an inch of its life.

ANDRE TOUSSAINT
BAHAMIAN BALLADS
NAXOS WORLD 76029 CD

VARIOUS
DEEP RIVER OF SONG: BAHAMAS 1935 VOL 2
ROUNDER 821811832 CD

Years before WOMAD established a beachhead for World Music in the hearts of disenfranchised rock fans, there were small bins in some record stores marked 'International', stocked with a motley assortment of music for airport shops, with tacky sleeve art and corny performances. Had it been issued 40 years ago, *Bahamian Ballads* would have ended up there. As it stands, the recently launched Naxos World imprint does much to undermine its credibility (won through its fine *Electric Highlife* compilation of John Collins's Ghanaian guitar band recordings) with this collection. The suspiciously mellow Andre Toussaint is a Haitian who worked in Nassau hotel lounges. Here he offers tourist trap ballads and supper club songs that seem to emanate from the soundtrack of *Dr No*.

Much closer to the real music of the Bahamas is the instalment of Rounder's Alan Lomax reissue series devoted to the recordings made by the young ethnographer after hearing Bahamian emigrant workers singing in the southern US. Many of the ring games and round dances contained here sound as though they were recorded from a distance of mere millimetres, with the tape as over-saturated as gnarly concert bootlegs. Still, the rough textures only enhance these vibrant performances, with frantic percussion and howling vocals derived from archaic European dances such as the quadrille and schottische. One standout is a Nassau string band's rendition of "Delia Gone", later to be recorded by numerous other Bahamians and, much later, by Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan. A shoo-in for the soundtrack of Terry *'Crumb'* Zwigoff's next film, the murder ballad contains mordantly witty verses on the order of, *"Now Tony is in prison/Drinkin' out a silver cup/Delia's in the graveyard/Tryin' the very best to get up."*

VARIOUS
AFRO-ROCK VOLUME ONE
EVOLVER/KONA EVL2002 CD

Since The Beastie Boys gave the late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's reputation a leg up in the pages of their *Grand Royal* magazine some years back, proliferating Afro-rock/funk compilations have begun to assume market density comparable to a Lagos traffic jam. Most of the mid-70s tracks heard on *Afro-Rock Vol One* hearken back to the sound first heard in the West on Original Music's *I've Found My Love*. *1960s Guitar Band Highlife Of Ghana*. West Africa was truly the elephant's graveyard of cheap Japanese knock-off guitars, chattering clusters of these weird instruments are heard on every cut here, along with wheezing keyboards, reinterpreted funk drumming and endless chants purloined from import copies of old Parliament albums. Those familiar with Strut's *Nigeria 70* compilation will immediately pick up on the more mannerly, stiff-backed approach of Ghanaian groups. All the same, the massed (and untuned) horns of The Mercury Dance Band on "Envy No Good" will inspire regret that the group only made one stab at Afrobeat, inspired by going to a Fela concert. Nkansah and Yaanom's "Pem Owe" boasts a guitar solo that rivals the careening fretwork and casual intonation normally associated with another local rocker of the period, Sir Victor Uwaifo. One can safely assume the guitarist's platforms had to have made a difference.

VARIOUS
THE ROUGH GUIDE TO BELLYDANCE
WORLD MUSIC NETWORK/ROUGH GUIDE RGNET1085 CD

GEORGE ABDO & HIS FLAMES OF ARABY ORCHESTRA
BELLYDANCE
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS 40458 CD

Raks sharki, better known as the bellydance music of the Middle East, has shimmied through the past 100 years with its popularity and risque appeal intact. Compiling even the most bodyrocking tracks from the genre's recent history is a daunting task, but the *Rough Guide To Bellydance* is a near perfect balance of libidinous impulses and casual virtuosity. As with other *Guides*, the cast of characters is varied and happily surprising, obviously the result of extensive research. Here, as elsewhere in the series, the CD offers revelations that will surprise even longtime Middle Eastern music fanatics. The strings that envelop "Enta Omri"s melody are thick and humid, forming a brilliant counterpoint to the filigree sketched by Mokhtar Al Said's oud. The lightning-swift tabla drumming of Armando El Mafufo (aka Uncle Mafufo) enlightens as to the Andalusian aspects of the form. Only multi-instrumentalist Omar Faruk Tekbilek, offering another instalment of the mannered Prog-raks sharki found on his albums for New Age imprints such as Celestial Harmonies and Hearts Of Space, runs against the raunchy and vivacious weft of the genre.

No less galvanising, the sound of George Abdo And His Flames Of Araby Orchestra is "a sonic artifact of an authentic American trend", according to the notes. From the first bars of the raks sharki standard "Ya Gameel", this Stateside bellydance ensemble make a great case for its eclectic repertoire, culturally encompassing several Middle Eastern countries in addition to tinctures of US pop and jazz. Abdo's terse, dramatic vocals sound as though they're recorded over a PA system in a Middle Eastern restaurant, resembling — texturally speaking — a raks sharki version of The Stooges' *Funhouse*. Though Abdo said his music was tailored for an American market, as the interplay of darabukka hand drums and kit snare drums suggests, his sound was exoticism writ large for 60s and 70s audiences. The sleevenotes sadly remark that Middle Eastern nightclub culture, of the sort that nourished Abdo's act, never recovered from the Gulf War. The cooperation between musicians of shared Arab or Mediterranean background has likewise disappeared.

HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

THE CLIPSE
GRINDIN'
ARISTA/STAR TRAK 078221507B 12"

One marvels at how weird The Neptunes' back catalogue will one day seem After making lily-pure Britney Spears purr about being a "slave" and earning heavy rotation on MTV, Pharell and Chad ditch the showbiz in favour of the snowbiz As Clipse rapper Pusha T brags, "So much dough, I can't swear I won't change," and he ain't talking about rap. Along with his brother Malice, the appropriately named Pusha brags about his accomplished slangin' of both dope rhymes and just dope. The rapping druggist mishears Big Daddy's anthem as "Long Live The 'Caine" and brags, "Call me subwoofer/'Cause I pump bass [base] like that, jack/On or off the track." Though his snarl is good enough, it only furthers the point that The Neptunes — who turn in one of their best beats in a while — can make practically anyone rock like the zeitgeist They pare their ideas into a focused, primitive stomp of slammed Cadillac doors and bat-wielding brats beating garbage cans.

SAGE FRANCIS
MAKESHIFT PATRIOT
STRANGE FAMOUS/HHS HHS0002 7"

Something comes over Sage Francis when he performs "Makeshift Patriot" live A far-beyond-driven glaze overtakes his visage as the dreary, Shalem-produced processional creeps through the cabinets, Sage seems to stare straight through the assembled crowd to a distant somewhere else, hoping that we follow his eyes and see what he sees too Penned shortly after 11 September, "Makeshift Patriot" is Sage's brash but frank contribution to the flagging currents of political discourse Filled with over-the-top impressions of powers-that-be vitriol ("There is a new price on freedom — so buy into it while supplies last! Until I find more relevant scripture to quote, remember — our God is bigger, stronger, smarter and much wealthier!") and 'good guy' picketing ("Don't waive [wave] your rights with your flags"), Sage's track — first released on the Internet last October — is caustic, grim and closed. Advocating rejection and rejecting nearly everything ("Can you count how many times so far I-ran Baghdad ['back that'] same tape?"), Sage drops some critical mental jewels but offers little hope for constructive recourse He wants to believe, but he's not sure if he can — gods, monsters and terrorists aside, the larger battle here pits Sage versus self in the hopes that cynicism doesn't overtake his fibre

G-DEP
SPECIAL DELIVERY REMIX
BAD BOY ZZ045 12"

The line divining genius from lunacy wasn't meant for people like Ghostface Killah, neither were the lines painted on streets. On this remix for G-Dep's ode to Federal Express, hired gun Ghost taunts logic and hits every bump and pothole in sight, speckling his Denali interior with champagne spills With his characteristically slurry incoherence, Ghost brags about his wardrobe to P Diddy: "Outfits is 4000 and better/The rhinestones in my Flintstones look crazy in my sweater." You can practically hear G-Dep's eyes shift from side to side, enemy to enemy, his eerily assured, calm voice belies the intentions within as he "spits anthrax" over producer EZ Elpee's pachinko beat. Fresh from discovering Gong, the other Elpee opts for a simple approach no changes, only a flickering, blingy strobe and the intermittent ring-ring of a bicycle bell Freshly rehabilitated jailbird Keith Murray treads his way back down the river and rushes into the arms of the nearest microphone, confirming, "Yeah I'm gutter/What I utter got you timid/Hesitatin' like a stutter"

NOAH23
QUICKSAND
PLAGUE LANGUAGE PLLP001 CD

There is some rap nowadays that has nothing to do with rap. Save the rare moment when he warns listeners not to front on him, Canada's Noah23 uses HipHop for delivery rather than vernacular and his debut album touches on about 4000 of his most precious thoughts; the kid's got too much to say and not enough time to get it out so it's a good thing his motormouth is up to the task A truly open-minded kid ("Some nights I like to listen to Simon and Garfunkel/Then go out on the town and ride my dark jungle") with a knack for science and angst, each of his 15 cuts are like little personal philosophies on people, the purpose of life and days spent absorbing any and every influence "What if Earth were the real heaven?" he asks optimistically on "Volapuk" The nice "Crypto Spondian" finds him shadow-rhyming against a chopped up bass walk and he does a surprisingly good job taming Nina Simone's runaway batucada on "Learning Curve", turning Nina's dancefloor classic "See-Line Woman" into an excuse to indict capitalism for "stealing his virginity" and choose the International Noise Conspiracy instead A mouthful? Listen closely and spot the references to Robin James's Cassette Mythos, Moosehead beer, John Peel and semiotic theory

SCARFACE
MY BLOCK
DEF JAM SOUTH 3145828651 12"

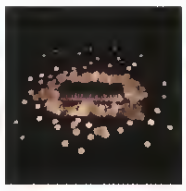
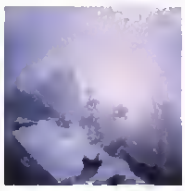
Chances are that Scarface's block isn't the same one he came up on in the 1980s as part of the ruffneck Geto Boys On "My Block", he raps about gutters and grinds with a weathered defiance and grimy earnestness, taking intermittent, awkward breaths at weird spots as though still plagued by the tricks in his mind "We've probably done it all homey, believe me," he sighs proudly, not so much bragging but just telling his life of Swisher Sweets, dirt hustles and occasional highs like it is With its tail-chasing Donny Hathaway piano loop and some hard 'nuff drum kicks, Nashiem Myrick's beat proves just how easy it is to sound like a Premier soundalike nowadays Passable but pale when compared to youngblood Kanye West's turn on B-side classic "Guess Who's Back". There's this beautiful, balletic quality to West's production, like pirouettes on clean, precise sheets of ice Jay-Z shows up to testify for his battleworn friend, taunting the corners. "Y'all playin' Baseketball" Scarface agrees. "What the fuck you think I slang for, to run against the grain?" Either way, the newly elected Def Jam South talent scout is likely earning stacks taller than his former midget partner Bill

SUPERSOUL
SOUNDCLASH (CHAMPIONS)
METATRONIX MX3108 12"

Supersoul is the capable alter ego of Omar Clemetson, a clash-minded wanderer whose sensibilities spring from somewhere betwixt Jamaica and Miami Outsourcing drum programs from neighbour Push Button Objects, Supersoul's riddim limps to the contest with broken wings and an impish sense of direction as the combative Dynas, Skam and Judah Manson make their opponents disappear like ballot boxes Though songbird Juliet streaks and wails in the background about the collective's champion effort, it's not all that convincing until recast against Fat Jon's ample remix on the flip. Less combative than Supersoul's slap-stammer original, Jon's sombre piano and pronounced drums eulogise the downfall of a departed soundboy With its industrial clanks, purposeful bass and short, pronounced horn stabs, Clemetson's excellent solo turn on "So Real, So True" is both fresh and clean

VOID
SUFFER GREAT NATION
BOTANICA DEL JIBARO BDJ003 1 12"

There isn't much 'conscious' rap nowadays but there's a lot of politically pissed, indignant, flagpole through your eyehole rap teetering on the edge of sedition And that's a good thing Botanica is the HipHop arm of the Third World electronics Beta Bodega Coalition, and Void is a side project featuring various configurations of Algorithm members Dr Faustus, Plex and Seth P Brundel. The terribly grating racket of bagpipes on "Ellis Island" reminds you that guest Goblen doesn't rap to sound pretty "Read between your lies " Faustus's "Suffer Great Nation" is his laundry list of signs that evil has overtaken our sector of the globe Chernobyl, Columbine, foreign policy negligence, racism and police brutality all get Faustus's gas face, and it's safe to say the "nation" he refers to ain't Afghanistan "What if the wretched victims of imperialism were to rise up?/The ignorant were to wise up?" he wonders, "Flip the Earth like a coin, hope for the right side up!" A sampled voice on closer "Theory" suggests hope — "I'm working on something to change the world" — but it's only fitting that the song is an instrumental. Convinced that the end is a mere stone's throw away, you almost feel a bit guilty admiring the frenetic sleeve art and dissecting the production. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

ANTHONY BRAXTON
NINETET (YOSHI'S) 1997 VOL 1
LEO LR 343/344 2XCD

Ghost Trance music from Braxton's nine piece group, which has Brandon Evans, James Fei, Jackson Moore, Andre Vida, JD Parran and Braxton himself on reeds, Kevin O'Neil on electric guitar, Kevin Norton on drums and Joe Fonda on bass. "Compositions N 207 and N 208" (both recorded live) occupy a disc each and follow a now familiar pattern – highly disciplined pulsing repetition of quasi-mantric motifs occasionally fraying as tangential utterances break through They are like entwined stems, separating at intervals to let out shoots and weird blooms, being stretched sometimes to thinness, then restored to combined sturdiness The stamina required for these performances is phenomenal Listening, you can succumb to the hypnotic pulse and await the flashes and changes

FRED FRITH/ YOSHISABURO TOYOZUMI/ ONNYK/JOHN ZORN
ARS LONGA DENS BREVIS
ALLELOPATHY ALL2 CD

ONNYK
PRIVATE IDIOMS
PUBLIC EYESORE 40 CD

Onnyk is guitarist Kinno Yoshiaki His favoured fretboard hammering technique frequently recalls the work of Hans Reichel, although the two solo improvisations on *Private Idioms* (from 1995 and 1997) do bear Onnyk's own idiosyncratic stamp He's a busy player, massaging the instrument's neck, worrying and teasing percussive clusters and their acoustic shadows On the live recording *Ars Longa Dens Brevis* Onnyk cedes the guitar role to Fred Frith for much of the time and flails around with alto and soprano saxes while drummer Yoshisaburo Toyozumi cuts a broad swathe through the middle Onnyk clings to his horns and adds some cheesy keyboards when Zorn's alto and birdcalls replace Frith for another agitated trio Frith (reflective) and Zorn (more extrovert) take a solo each to conclude the set. The group improvisations aren't short on teeth but it's those solos that serve up the persuasive artistry here

JOE GIARDULLO/ JOE MCPHEE/MIKE BISIO/ TANI TABBAL
SHADOW & LIGHT
DRIMALA DR0234701 CD

Multi-instrumentalist Giardullo has collaborated with notable musicians such as composer Pauline Oliveros and singer Thomas Buckner, and for the past decade he has regularly played alongside tenor saxophonist and trumpeter Joe McPhee Scheduling this session at West Shokan, New York for 11 September 2001, he had no idea that chilling events in the global media arena and the actual deaths of thousands of New Yorkers would condition the music as it did Determining to go ahead with the recording, the wind players, with bassist Bisio and percussionist Tabbal, registered their shock and incomprehension in music that has the alarmed beauty of a premature thaw It's all the more affecting because it lacks the self-awareness required for formal elegy To have worked through numbness to this subdued affirmation is really quite extraordinary

CHARLOTTE HUG & PAT THOMAS
CERTAIN QUESTIONS
UNIT UTR4134 CD

Swiss violist Hug (pronounced 'Hoog') is a familiar figure on the London free improvising scene, but for this recording Pat Thomas took his electronic instruments to Zurich. These 11 tracks display both musicians' fabulous capacity to initiate and respond, to intuit and infer as they piece together intricate mosaics Hug demonstrates that the viola need be no more constrained than the synthesizer in terms of sonic inventiveness The instruments retain their discrete identities but interlock so tightly and consistently that they seem to share a single source An absorbing instance of highly unpredictable music that appears to find its form according to an obscure and irresistible inner necessity

PETER JANSON/ JONAS KULLHAMMAR/ PÅL NILSSEN-LOVE
LIVE AT GLENN MILLER CAFE VOL 1
AYLER AYL012 CD

Documentation of part of a growing process for Swedish tenor and baritone player Kullhammar, born in 1978 and steeped in free jazz of the kind that has gravitated invariably to Coltrane Bassist Janson and Norwegian drummer Nilssen-Love are major league strong and subtle Both have played with mighty saxophonist Mats Gustafsson and there's a distinct sense of nurturing taking place here Kullhammar takes a while to break out of the security of repeated phrases and his evident respect for the other musicians at times seems to hold him back On the surge, as on the lengthy "Blow-Out", however, the signs are good, and Janson and Nilssen-Love always have something of interest to say

THEO JÖRGENSMANN QUARTET
TO ORNETTE – HYBRID IDENTITY
HATOLOGY 576 CD

Clarinet player Jörgensmann pays homage to Ornette and there's no sign of "Lonely Woman" or any other Coleman theme The quartet works with original material but the tribute seeps through via drummer Klaus Kugel's elastic measurement of time, arresting harmonies summoned up by Christopher Dell on vibes, Christian Ramond's bouncy and tactfully bowed double bass and Jorgensmann's coiling and leaping melodic lines Awareness of jazz tradition becomes a creative resource when genuinely contemporary roles are found for acknowledgment of well-established models *Hybrid Identity* is elegantly applied Ornettology; a tight and loose unit in luminous motion

FRANZ KOGLMANN & LEE KONITZ
WE THOUGHT ABOUT DUKE
HATOLOGY 543 CD

FRANZ KOGLMANN
DON'T PLAY, JUST BE
BETWEEN THE LINES BTL021 CD

Viennese trumpeter and flugelhorn player Koglmann is a lucid and urbane soloist As a leader he surrounds himself with musicians of a similar ilk who are intelligent and characterful, with a penchant for serenity These two releases – a revived tribute to the great Ellington ensembles from 1994 and a newly recorded set of Koglmann's own compositions – confirm an abiding concern with the constitution of ensemble sound, aligning musical forces to stimulate mind and body, taking risks collectively while preserving the integrity of distinctive voices Duke is remembered by the all-brass Pipe Trio and Koglmann's Monoblue Quartet, featuring bassist Klaus Koch, guitarist Bernhard Stangl and the magnificent Tony Coe on clarinet and tenor Altoist Konitz guests with both groups, adding his poise to finely balanced readings of pieces from the Ellington stable alongside other original material The recent commissions are ambitious and draw on the services of Klangforum Wien *Don't Play, Just* Be is a virtuoso blending of a Koglmann quartet with the orchestra, animated of course by an Ellingtonian spirit. "Spate Liebe" adds a singer, dazzling soprano Ursula Fiedler who is perfect for this hybrid role "Entre Chien Et Loup" is for cool quartet alone, with Coe, bassist Peter Herbert and guitarist James Emery It would be difficult to overstate the fine judgment underpinning Koglmann's successes

EVAN PARKER/ PHIL WACHSMANN/ TEPPO HAUTA-AHO
EVAN PARKER/ PHIL WACHSMANN/ TEPPO HAUTA-AHO
LEO LR348/349 2XCD

Teppo Hauta-aho has played double bass with The Helsinki Philharmonic and The Finnish National Opera Orchestra, and has improvised extensively, with a track record including previous performances with violinist Wachsmann The string players, with Parker on tenor and soprano, were recorded live at a jazz festival in Finland and in London's Gateway Studio. Collectively they realize five lengthy, refined and restrained trio pieces – finely crafted designs that imply a deep need to make rather than some superficial inclination to be expressive In addition, each musician takes a solo on the studio disc Parker's is dedicated to the memory of concrete poet Dom Sylvester Houédard, another skilled designer whose clear gestures were hinged on mystery

PAUL RUTHERFORD
TROMBOLENIUM
EMANEM 4072 CD

There was a visionary quality to Rutherford's 1974 album *The Gentle Harm Of The Bourgeoisie* that immediately marked it out as that paradoxical thing – a defining moment of free improvisation, one of the coordinate points of an emerging genre The solos collected on *Trombolenium*, recorded between 1986 and 1995, don't carry the same epochal clout but they leave no doubt that Rutherford is one of improvised music's true giants Different venues bring out different aspects of his playing, but wherever he performs sparks fly Continual flashes of technical brilliance impress, but it's the shaping sense, embedding those glints within a coherent and directed flow, that really confirms Rutherford's stature

JEFF SONG & LOWBROW
DIASPORAMA
STELLAR SOUND STL 1012 CD

Song is an outstanding bass guitarist He reserves that instrument for the final track of *Diasporama*, concentrating instead on electric and acoustic cellos which he plays with comparable panache Long-term collaborator Matt Turner also plays cellos, conversing, thickening and engaging in cut and thrust motions The fuller picture of Lowbrow includes violinist Jason Kao Hwang, percussionist John Mettam, flautist Michel Gentile and the trumpets of Taylor Ho Bynum and, on one track, Dean Laabs These guided improvisations are grounded in Song's thoughts on Asian-American identity and are accordingly plural in character, packed with sharp turns, quick changes and bold juxtapositions Fragile/tough, melodic/abstract, placid/enraged, ironic/heartfelt Both/and music to supersede the either/or

GEORG WISSEL
THE ARTE OF NAVIGATION
NURNICHTNUR NNN1010927 CD

Wissel plays alto and tenor in the course of these seven concentrated instances of outward bound saxophonics, recorded before an audience in Cologne last September Navigation is an apt metaphor These waters are scarcely uncharted these days, but they remain hazardous, posing risks through shallows of cliche and reefs of formlessness Wissel not only carries an impressive cargo of once exotic techniques, he also steers an assured and efficient course Overtones and multiphonics are incorporated as the stuff of the music rather than tacked on as arbitrary embellishments It all makes sense and is the right length – less than 40 minutes, enough to hold the imagination without draining it

JACK WRIGHT & BOB FALESCH
CLANG
ZEROEGGZIE 0X2BDF CD

The metaPiano is a computer-linked instrument that, according to Bob Falesch, "usually sounds like a grand piano but could use any sound". Exploiting the fullness and formality of its grand pianism, Falesch works a gestural counterpoint against Wright's angular saxophony Wright's wild half-century engagement with reed instruments has left its mark on younger players including Bhob Rainey Wright's own voice, now reined in but still incisive and jagged, is increasingly being heard on record It remains individualistic but adaptable, both oddly sensitive and thoroughly amenable to imaginative responses of the kind Falesch supplies here

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Ian Penman

ANDREA BELFI
NED NO2
CHOCOLATE GUNS 001 CD

Case of felt; promissory emblem re' Kaspar Hauser/Werner Herzog, self portrait of the artist as her own muse, angel on a threshold Belfi blurs stylistic boundaries and 'self/gender plotlines in a rabbit warren of nano noisewash and st-st-st-utterance and plain diurnal joy (days in Florence, nights listening to either Maria Callas or friends being bratty in a punk group) in four or five UN-epic sketches, like Julia Kristeva made sonic flush, quiet, domestic, but as artist Ian Hamilton Finlay once apostrophised "Certain gardens are described as retreats, when they are really attacks"

THE CAT
THE CAT
TIME STEREO NO NUMBER CD

Someone had to do it: 40 mins of close-miked feline, ur-rumble of its purr figured as some kind of ultimate ambient wash Urchin is the instrument of ambience (cat as furry theremin?), harnessed by hairless ones Davin Brainard & Windy Weber, post-mixed by Warn Defever But it sounds wrong: less like the bliss note I associate with putting ear to pet, and rather more like The Bonzos' *"that was Roger's wah wah rabbits"* soundbite Something in the mix has wiped all feral singularity away and replaced it with 'found' art formalism it could be a record of anything

ALEX GRILLO
L'AMOUR [TOME 1]
LA NUIT TRANSFIGUREE LN340109 CD

Intertwined notes from a collective heart Alex Grillo, Helene Labarère, Didier Petit, Christine Wodrascka, give us a four-fold meditation on the 'banalite' of the song of love and other post-'Papi Sigmund' thoughts that swim through their heads and come out their mouths as shout, whisper, howl, moan, plea and plaint *"Existe-t il une musique de l'Amour?"* they ask, inside a package that owes more than a bit to mid period American artist Jim Dine An interlacement of dada (but not Dada's) voice and girl/boy Improv which, though fairly trad, the flinty/caressing twine of voice, cello, piano and vibrant percussion pays back suite dividends 68 and "69" meet – if not exactly, ah, head to head, then fruitfully

INTONARUMORI
INTONARUMORI
UNIT CIRCLE REKKIDS TUC062 CD

MATERIAL
UNIT CIRCLE REKKIDS TUC075 CD

Noise machinery unpacked in Seattle via the absolutist past of futurist klang (Intonarumori = 'noise intoners' = 'machines built to mimic industrial sounds') through the flexible fingers of Kevin Goldsmith, whose suitably alchemisty name proves to be no disappointment The 'industrial /futurist clue is a dead herring, because this is far richer work, ghostlier, more freeform (Echoes of Nurse With Wound in the light touch, and low key humour and pert use of sampled vox.) Goldsmith is primarily a cellist (manipulator of cells?), but his variegated scapes straddle old-skool Improv and nu-school electronica, modest except in inventiveness, somehow very likeable and surprisingly touching a real pleasure.

FRANCISCO LÓPEZ
BUILDINGS [NEW YORK]
V2_ARCHIEF V232 CD

Vantage point. New York, heard underground and inside out, 'field recordings ordered but untreated into one long white noise night, packaging pointblank black with flecks of tinge red – but the darkness here is a nighttime hive of sound life, rather than any kind of geopolitical rupture, the city going about its mechanical busyness A suite of absence – and abeyance –transcribed from cable, drip, shaft, warehouse, freight. a heterotopia of myriad 'empty' spaces, whose hum clings and klangs and keeps you awake deep in dream We get to hear what is not normally heard all the sound of all the trees that fall when no one is there to overlook their meaning There is something *massive* about this work, in the sum of all its particularities, tiny rubbings, washes, leaks, fissures and creaks, I suspect it will grow into a whole city of thought for its listeners

MATTIN/ROSY PARLANE
MENDIETAN
WMO/R 05 CD

October in the Basque country, laptops on mountain tops, private ritual with headphones, different vectors in different locations, dual interventions processed in real-time, listening to spectral air music, listening as music, sublimely low levels wrenched apart by thunderous scratch, *real* interruption, what you might call *editure*, which questions to what extent 'resonance' is produced against historical sup/position, and how Ambient poetics cannot hope to somehow magically escape it all Where much post-Cagean 'field recording' still has a Romantic view of landscape this represents a gritty and persuasive post-modern 'politics' of pastoral engagement, a spoiling device for/against the convenient sonic fiction of the 'imaginary soundtrack', which tests nothing and explores very little The hills here are alive with surveillance cameras and hidden factions And the sonic valence of Mattin/Parlane – full marks to them for going beyond cliche, daring to provoke

MUSLIMGAUZE
HAMAS CINEMA GAZA STRIP
STAALPLAAT STCD157 CD

Come what may – and just like the conflict which provided Bryn Jones with his works life – it seems like Muslimgauze will always be with us Even in death, the 'new' releases (this was recorded in 1998) roll on – fittingly, as Muslimgauze always was an archive in action, backing into the future like Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history', bolting together steely collage music from the debris piling up at his feet Doubters claim it all sounds 'the same', but then, the (bad) 'news' remains the same, the Middle East 'conflict' a massively depressing return of the Same. Opener "Yasser Arafat In Tunis" and the title track stand out here; but even doubters should hang in for the final track, "Baiti Utensil" and its harshly epiphanous strip-down of punified beat-repeat; then a 'ghost' track lobs out a brief, angular dub of startling ferocity Four years on, Muslimgauze still outflanks the opposition with its revenant dance although an uneasy feeling persists that to review this music on stylistic terms alone is really not enough

OHNE
1
MEGO OHNEMEGO1 CD

Aggressive isn't the word – Mars alone knows what is – but I was left feeling ambivalent about this debut download/pile-up from the quartet of 'Dm Myth' (aka Tom Smith of To Live And Shave In LA, et al) Dave Phillips, Daniel Loewenbrueck and Reto Maeder It's a great sprawling, grating, thrashing, electrocuted octopus of haz-e-boy NOIZE which, unlike other entries here – Grillo, Mattin/Parlane, Muslimgauze – has no frame text or puncept or theory kickback, so pushing you to take it on its own stark sonic terms. A bit TOO full-on to pull in too many new ears, real-time performance is the best place to sample Ohne's one-stop apocalypse

PEOPLE LIKE US
RECYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA
MESS MEDIA MESS1 NO NUMBER CD

Theoretically, I like everything about Vicki Bennett's pick n' binge sampledelicatessen I like the idea, the graphics, the graphic Englishness – every little thing about it, in fact, except actually having to listen to it, when I just hear something which comes off like a sixth form workshopping of Chris Morris, without any real bloodshed Theoretically, I could expound on her feminine semiotic, in practice, one track on a compilation is ideal I like the title of this career-encompassing 30 track sampler I like the idea of her unacademic, unsnobby ten year rifle through archives and airwaves, but PLU's hardcore whimsy still leaves me screaming for LESS

PSYCHIC TV
SNOWFLAKE
KLANG GALERIE GG53 7"

Inscribed with a 1983 Genesis P-Orridge S&M sketch, this heavy vinyl 7" is doubtless a v huggable artefact, but the grooves disclose lite disko, whose one chance at posterity would have been a Trance-friendlier playing time A pleasant enough mantra does nothing to alter my belief that GPO is one of those people whose import now lies more in who they are than what they do He's a great media trickster, Mercury knows, but the lacuna between transgressive past and a rather too sedat(iv)e sonic now seems telling

TANAKH
VILLA CLAUSTROPHOBIA
ALIEN8 ALIENCD33 CD

Opulent and low key, gilded and grimy, humid and gorgeous, Jesse Poe's five piece from Richmond, Virginia take on a whole aether of ghostlances (including Mick Turner of Dirty Three, Nirmal Bajekel via Ravi Shankar, and Ned Oldham' from Palace), more string driven things than you can shake a bow at (including Partchesque handmade instruments), and emerge blinking into the RA-light with a sublime barcode of electroacoustic sound, effortlessly merging Eastern, Country, Roots, without ever tipping over into Jools Hollandaise lite This is exactly what all the hype led me to expect from Lambchop, but where the latter leave me utterly untouched, this clicked immediately – palpable warmth, flame, gold Long instrumental folkdrones like the central "Mashah" and the two part "In Every Villa [ ] Claustrophobia" recall prime Current 93, while songs like "Gently Johnny" are like Nick Cave plus sunlight. An Egyptian tomb's worth of odd timbres and arcs and subtle stylistic fillips (Nick Drake backed by Archie Shepp and Alice Coltrane in a Deep South dawn?) and it feels like the sort of quietly unassuming CD you find quietly usurps more 'important' works Lovely like honey on your beloved's eyelids

FEDERICO UGHI
ULERS TWO
577 RECORDS 5772 CD

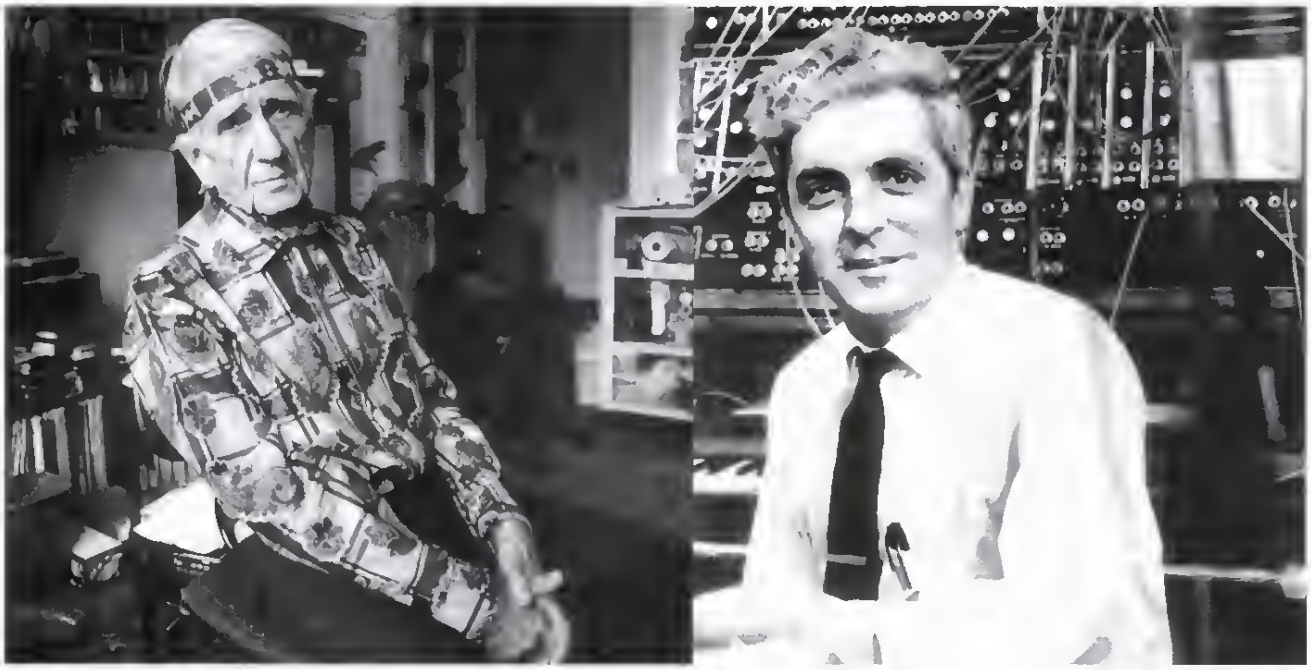
Neo-geo naturalism twined around modern 'editure' around Improv, keeping all the virtues of each, without selling out the drama of any, 'ULERS = Unrehearsed Live Editing of Recorded Sounds' plucked from the streets of Rome and re-edited in New York, making it 'live' twice over - and thereby throwing into reflexive question what 'live' or 'natural' might be or become at some later date A sonic psychoreograph, moulding the 'overheard' into something spacey, pointillistic and surprisingly dramatic, Ughi's live 'sample and edit' proves to be something of a tightrope act – rich and chromatically strange, like the intersection between "Via Di Panico" and "Ponte S Angelo" – which, even if my Italian is way out, has got to be Trip/Trope of the Month, anywise

VARIOUS
KREV X: THE KINGDOMS OF ELGALAND~VARGALAND 1992-2002
ASH INTERNATIONAL ASH6 6 2XCD

In-joke or serious adventure? Access the Website (www it kth se/KREV) for the outlines of this topographical-conceptual-political prank – which, like a modern day Situationist position paper, deploys humour to make serious points about national identity. Inscribed in red and black, it's mostly the left side of whimsy, and, at 140-plus minutes, the sprawl of contributors (including two ex-Wire men, J O'Rourke, John Duncan, Fennesz and People Like Us) ensures there's something for everyone jizzy digital piano à la Terre Thaemlitz, 'pataphysical word command, cheeky thrash Metal, spoken parable, drone, code, hitch, poke There's an off central post-occupation with boundaries, borders, edges, anywhere where all that is solid can be smelted down into marginal-utopian space – just as predestined 'message can break up into static at any time, as we collectively wake from the scanty inane dream of History . *"Donald Duck, Nostradamus, Raymond Roussel, Nastassia Kinski, Maria Callas, Jacques Derrida, John Major"* scrrrtch ccrrkle. FADE.

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Gil Evans (left), Robert Moog

CASTLES MADE OF SOUND: THE STORY OF GIL EVANS
LARRY HICOCK
DA CAPO HBK $25

BY BEN WATSON

As a music industry journalist, songwriter and broadcaster, Larry Hicock seems well placed to write a biography of Gil Evans (1912 *BB*), the arranger who rode a series of cataclysmic shifts in fashion the dancehall big bands of the 40s, the post-bebop 'cool of the 50s, the electrified fusion of the early 70s, and an 80s/90s polystylism which embraced The Band's Robbie Robertson, Japanese enthusiasm for live jazz at the New York club Sweet Basil, Julien Temple's *Absolute Beginners*, and Sting Hicock 'interviewed' Evans in 1973, though the arranger was wily enough to chat away without submitting to the tape recorder In 1988, Hicock was ready to make a documentary film about Evans and his famous openended big band After hearing news of his death, he decided to write a biography instead The bulk of the material here was gathered in the period 1990-93 67 taped interviews with Evans's family, friends and musicians. Apart from Laurent Cugny's *Las Vegas Tango Une Vie De Gil Evans*, there has been no biography before, so Hicock's book has some of the freshness and character of all first-hand oral history

The book contains an epigraph from Albert Einstein "The example of great and pure individuals is the only thing that can lead us to noble thoughts and deeds" What fascinates Hicock about Gil Evans is his disdain for worldly values He hated the competitive world of showbusiness and found tussles about money and songwriting credits distasteful He was a lifelong friend of the notoriously pushy Miles Davis, and it's difficult to imagine anyone else staying the course Having made his name as an arranger for Claude Thornhill – whose distinctive floating harmonies and French horn voicings were popular among musicians seeking escape from swing cliches – Evans held open house in his basement apartment on New York's 55th Street Gerry Mulligan, John Lewis, Gunther Schuller and Miles Davis would all drop by Uniquely, Charlie Parker was allowed to shoot up there, and kept his works in a drawer Evans introduced the musicians to the idea of borrowing scores from public libraries, and they would pore over Bach and Stravinsky

Gil Evans is most famous for the records he arranged for Miles Davis at Columbia Records *Miles Ahead* (1957), *Porgy And Bess* (1958) and *Sketches Of Spain* (1959) It's here that a certain scepticism sets in For Miles devotees, the unworldly Evans is a virtuous shadow to Miles and his big dollar advances, flash Italian suits and sports cars Yet the sound of these records is incredibly commercial Like *The Sound Of Music* and *Oklahoma!*, their strained, sweet string textures and hysterical climaxes mean that their widespread popularity remains a puzzle for post-rock 'n' roll ears

Gunther Schuller puts his finger on the problem in his interview "This had all been done before; it just hadn't been done in jazz" No amount of knowledge of the classics will prepare you for the thrill of Charlie Parker's instant invention or the multilevelled metres of The Mingus Workshop However, *Sketches Of Spain* is *degraded* classicism, a botch and a masquerade, a romantic evocation on the level of restaurant decor In the light of Clement Greenberg's comments on the link between artistic kitsch and political tyranny, it's interesting to read here about *Concierto De Aranjuez*, the key inspiration for *Sketches Of Spain* Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto* was first performed in Spain in 1940, a year after Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War Unlike Pablo Picasso and Luis Buñuel, who had been vocal against the fascists, Rodrigo was embraced by the new regime, and was awarded a prestigious music professorship in Madrid His declared intention in the *Concierto* was to revive classical models and create "an upsurge of national feeling" Hicock's music industry brief – exclusively concerned with race relations and record sales – cannot gauge the significance of these facts One wonders what Conlon Nancarrow – who fought the fascists in Spain, and was exiled by the McCarthyites to Mexico for his pains – would make of Miles and Evans and their enthusiasm for Rodrigo (the more one learns, the more penetrating appears the satire of Billy Jenkins's *Scratches Of Spain*)

Gil Evans was Miles Davis's musical adviser during the period when he developed a bestselling alternative to free jazz (a modal boogaloo), culminating in *Bitches Brew*, CBS's stirring showcase for their recently acquired Fender Rhodes keyboard Again, it is hard to discern Evans's particular contribution, since the music is so utterly different in sonority and attack from Claude Thornhill and *Sketches Of Spain* Evans was obviously a wonderfully accommodating figure in a turbulent scene, but Hicock's evidence for him as *grand auteur* is less than convincing His chaotic sessions at Sweet Basil in the 80s sound terrific when described by the musicians, but the recorded evidence is that they were rarely more than the sum of their parts Certainly, when Hannibal Marvin Peterson lets loose on the impressionist harmonies of "Zee Zee", it's stunning, and any group with altoist Arthur Blythe is going to rise to great heights But by the time we're dealing with the *Absolute Beginners* soundtrack and Evans's work for Martin Scorsese and Sting, Hicock's hagiography has entered the land of corporate make-believe Tellingly, there is no photo of Gil Evans before 1959 When jazz was actually being created as a music – rather than marketed – it was invisible As Johnny 'Guitar' Watson put it, "You would have been down in the earth to know" (this corresponds precisely to the situation of creative music today)

This biography is carefully researched, but by the end, the claims about Evans become tedious, like hearing an endless account of a fantastic party you weren't at Is it really so exceptional to encounter a musician who is obsessed with music rather than money? Music is fundamentally too social an activity to be squeezed into Hicock's individualist agenda By the end, the unctuous sound of the rich and successful praising a 'genius' they've worked with – comments which seem generous, but are really boasts at one remove – starts to turn sour, and you want to hear the recorded evidence, which in Evans's case is rather meagre A real assessment of Evans and the vexed relationship of composers to improvisors – a microcosm of all social organisation – would mean placing Evans in a broader context than that of the American music industry, and this would mean broaching historical issues Hicock would rather ignore

PHOTO (EVANS) DEREK RIDGERS

ELECTRONIC AND EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC: PIONEERS IN TECHNOLOGY AND COMPOSITION

THOMAS B HOLMES

ROUTLEDGE PBK $24 95

BY DAVE MANDL

This substantially updated new edition of Thomas Holmes's long out of print *Electronic And Experimental Music* is the Desert Island choice Not only does it cover the history of electronic music from its late 19th century roots to the present – and then pretty thoroughly, considering the constraints of its 300 pages – it also includes a chapter on the building blocks of sound synthesis, detailed digressions on the origins of MIDI and the history of computer music It's even got a handful of *High Fidelity* style top ten lists Himself an electronic composer, Holmes interviewed most of the legendary figures quoted himself He knows his subject well, and writes in a breezy, blessedly jargon-free style

Despite the book's somewhat ambiguous title, he limits his coverage to experimental electronic music only, rather than experimental music in the broader sense His view is benevolently technocentric, focusing on the crucial give and take that has always gone on between modern composers, inventors and engineers Though his claim that "music as we know it today . would not exist without technology" is a wild overstatement, he does provide ample historic evidence of technology's huge impact on modern Western music, from Helmholtz's pioneering 19th century work dissecting sound waves to Cage's early, live electronic experiments.

Holmes's story starts with electronic music's prehistory in the fin de siècle European avant garde, whose explorations of alternative pitch and tonal systems set the stage for the more radical experiments to come; he refers to Erik Satie's 18 hour minimalist masterpiece *Vexations* as "the first calculated example of a Western composition made to create a new state of listening" Moving on to the more widespread rebellion against Western tonality of the early 20th century, he intertwines it with the equally important, concurrent explosion of technological research and development He tracks the constant feedback loop between composers like Varèse, Cowell, Milhaud, Messiaen and Hindemith, and inventors like Martenot, Théremin and Thaddeus Cahill Not only did the former compose pieces for the latter's instruments, they even helped them refine their inventions Varèse's attitude was typical "I dream of instruments obedient to my thought. . with their contribution of a whole new world of unsuspected sounds "

Holmes's focus next shifts to the mid-20th century flowering of tape recorders – the evolutionary leap that made possible the infinite expansion of music's vocabulary first envisioned by the Futurists. This new generation of compositional tools allowed for a complete break from the tyranny of notation, enabling composers to treat even natural sounds as mutable objects The geniuses of the second Golden Age of invention that were the late 1950s and 60s were synthesizer pioneers Robert Moog and Donald Buchla, and lesser known figures like Raymond Scott and Hugh Le Caine Focusing again on the engineers' relationships with visionary composers like Alwin Nikolais, Herbert Deutsch and Wendy Carlos, Holmes details a rich history of their inventions. He also devotes a chapter to groundbreaking but now forgotten 196Ds phenomena like the multimedia ONCE festivals of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the Space Theater founded by Robert Ashley and Gordon Mumma Ashley himself once lamented that the 60s "were an incredibly fertile period in American music" whose history only "exists in composers' file cabinets like mine". He should be pleased to hear that Holmes has updated the public record.

Oddly, considering the breadth of his coverage through the end of the 20th century, his treatment of the contemporary scene is somewhat provincial, leaning heavily on New Yorkers like Sonic Youth, Ikue Mori, Gen Ken Montgomery and DJ Spooky, while all but ignoring Europe and Japan But this is a relatively minor glitch in an otherwise wonderfully comprehensive work

RHYTHM AND BUSINESS: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BLACK MUSIC

NORMAN KELLEY (EDITOR)

AKASHIC BOOKS HBK $24 95

BY PETER SHAPIRO

Along with *The Osbournes* and *Jackass*, the key to MTV's relevance renaissance has been *Cribs*, in which pop music's nouveau riche show a camera crew around their garish digs for the perverse amusement of sad bastards like you and me Judging by the comparative quality of tack on display, there is one simple lesson to be learned from the show unless you're going to marry your manager or the president of your record company, record for an 'independent label', or better yet, own your own label like Master P (seeing his mansion just makes you want to go out and buy the entire No Limit back catalogue in the hope that he'll be able to maintain the upkeep, so that future generations can marvel at his bayou equivalent of Brighton's Royal Pavilion). Unfortunately, *Cribs* says more about the state of the black music industry in a few steadicam shots than all 334 pages of *Rhythm And Business*.

One of the main problems of (and for) this book is that there has never been a musical form more business savvy and more aware of the exploitative nature of the music biz, if not capitalism as a whole, than HipHop In fact, someone more au fait with the ins and outs of historical materialism than me could read the entirety of HipHop as a "political economy of black music" *"Industry rule number 40B0 record company people are shady"* (A Tribe Called Quest, 1991), *"Industry shady it need to be taken over/Label owners hate me I'm raising the status quo up"* (Jay-Z, 2001) The other big problem of *R&B* is that this alleged political economy rarely rises above the level of either A Tribe Called Quest or Jay-Z The book is filled with such eye-opening observations as "In a capitalist society, businesses are organised to make profits, not to promote social ideals" This bombshell is then followed by the equally absurd "Therefore, the only way that Black Americans can control their images and cultural products is to become entrenched in the ownership class of the music industry" This second statement comes at the end of an essay that spends much of the time talking about how middle class blacks in the industry have heavily contributed to the essentialising of black identity It is also an essay that deliberately ignores the fact that the black-owned labels that spawned HipHop as a recorded medium were just as exploitative as their white-owned counterparts and engaged in business practices that were often far more dubious

If it's not talking down to you then *R&B* is ignoring what should be blindingly obvious Karl Hagstrom Miller's otherwise fine essay on the politics and economics of salsa would have been made relevant and probably could have had a great deal to say about independence versus assimilation if it had even barely touched on the phenomenon of Latin music crossover during the last few years Alas, it is up to you to draw your own conclusions about how Willie Colón's bad man tales articulate different things about the state of the Latin music industry and Latino cultural identity than Shakira's ass The fact that the music industry exploits everyone regardless of race, creed or sexual orientation is mentioned explicitly only once, in an essay fittingly titled "Tell Me Something I Don't Already Know". The only satisfying explanation of the institutional racism of the music biz comes in a 1987 report published by the American organisation, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People), reprinted here The report describes how the industry is organised along strictly segregated racial lines ('urban' divisions of record companies, 'urban' radio formats, the full marketing muscle of the majors only used on black records when it crosses over to the 'pop' charts), which are illegal Since the ascendancy of HipHop in the US, it's unclear whether this is still the case The best essay here is Michael Roberts's "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag Big Music's Post Fordist Regime And The Role Of Independent Music Labels", a fascinating investigation of the music industry's focus on distribution rather than production, and how this enables them to circumvent labour laws It's only slightly undone by its length (this is a book in itself, not a chapter in one), which forces the author to make sweeping statements without the opportunity to back them up

Typically, the most interesting question is only hinted at and never directly answered In his introductory essay, Norman Kelley writes, "Because African-American leaders essentially ignored the early years of black music development in the United States, others moved in and established a foothold Even during slavery, whites were dissing black folks while simultaneously taking advantage of them with the emergence of minstrelsy Whites couldn't ignore the creativity of blacks, and figured out 'how to grow rich off of black fun', as one minstrel poseur put it." Would black music have achieved its cultural relevance if it hadn't been exploited by whites? Kelley spends a great deal of time berating musicologists and cultural theorists for writing almost exclusively about the semiotics of black music rather than the 'real' issue of exploitation and "structure of stealing" That this thorny, difficult question is left untouched and unstated by this 'political economy' is precisely why people spend so much time on the 'hermeneutics of the blues' or 'representations of gender in *Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em*', and not on things that *Cribs* or *Behind The Music* do much better.

LEXICON DEVIL: THE FAST TIMES AND SHORT LIFE OF DARBY CRASH AND THE GERMS

BRENDAN MULLEN WITH DON BOLLES & ADAM PARFREY

FERAL HOUSE PBK $16.95

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

The vibrant and corrosive punk culture of late 70s Los Angeles embodied a number of contradictions, none of which helped the careers of its most interesting groups. Most glaring among these was that the scene, though situated within screaming distance of the world's most powerful media conglomerates, was virtually unknown outside city limits. Though separated from English influence by the additional breadth of a continent, LA's punk subculture was often slavishly Anglophile, making it that much larger an object of derision for parochial New York rock writers. Most UK punk outfits made decent sounding albums. The Sex Pistols shared a producer with Roxy Music and Procul Harum. Yet without exception the 70s garage groups operating in America's recording capital revelled in releasing wretchedly recorded music.

Angeleno punk showed its mettle in performance, often as not at the Masque, a fetid basement practice space-turned-club operated by Mancunian expatriate Brendan Mullen. It was on the Masque's stage that groups such as The Screamers, X, Black Randy And The Metro Squad and many others assailed their respective songbooks with bloodletting fury. Five women who frequented the Masque, sharing prurient interests and chemical appetites, became The Go-Go's, another early entry in the doomsday book of LA punk. When they later shed their transgressive impulses (along with several unphotogenic pounds) and achieved stardom as a lightweight pop confection, The Go-Go's justified the East Coast perception that punk, Los Angeles-style, was mostly a means to garner attention without having to hire a publicist: a stopover on the way to a movie career.

Yet it was another Masque mainstay who embodied the animal energy and ad hoc community spirit cultured in Mullen's subterranean lair. A writhing mass of inconsistencies and internalised confusion, pulled apart by the deaths of immediate role models, Jan Paul Breahm was cannon fodder for the surrogate family life offered by subcultures, both musical and religious. He sampled, and then stepped back from radical schooling and Scientology, preferring psychedelics paired with an eclectic literary diet skewed towards fascist philosophers such as Spengler, Nietzsche, Hitler and Charles Manson. The waning glam rock era provided the young autodidact with a perfect soundtrack for his reading: Bowie with his cocaine crazed ideology, Iggy with his irresistible agenda of self-destruction (much of the latter witnessed at close quarters by local punks-to-be in LA nightclubs). Breahm tested more than one identity en route to realising (well, almost) his perceived destiny as godhead-cum-lead singer in the persona of Darby Crash, frontman for The Germs and the most fearless performer of his day.

His story, as told from childhood through heroin-facilitated suicide, is the stuff of cliched rock tragedy: a bright, misunderstood charismatic is swept up in the machinations of the music business, runs foul of bad habits and the sycophants who enable his new-found vices, gives in to despair and wilfully ODs at the age of 22 after reforming his group and performing one of their best gigs. All of which rings true, save that the actual music business never had the chance to get its hooks into *Lexicon Devil*'s titular subject. The few recordings made by Darby Crash were released by local DIY labels. The Germs – like the great wasted LA group of ten years earlier, Arthur Lee's Love – never toured. By the time the dim, overpaid A&R minions of major labels got wind of the punks in their own backyard, Darby Crash was history.

Yet he is reanimated by the host of his contemporaries coerced by impresario Mullen to testify. *Lexicon Devil* has materialised hot on the heels of last year's memoir authored by Mullen and Marc Spitz, *We Got The Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story Of LA Punk* (Three Rivers Press/Random House). Both books utilize the oral history format first popularized by *Edie*, Jean Stein's 1982 portrait of Edie Sedgwick, another high diver of the low life whose incandescent presence might have been known by very few were it not for the dogged detective work of the writer in question. The oral biography makes for a great beach read, as its armature can support enough sleaze to sink shorter, conventionally written stories. The form is well suited to such tawdry, brutal stuff as was part of the furnishings for the punk cohort. *Please Kill Me*, the defining dossier on NYC punk in its salad years by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, made good use of the style, detailing drug deals, kleptomania and serial infidelity at the complete expense of the music that justified all the bad behaviour. *Lexicon Devil* redresses the balance. LA held its own within the punk landscape, and music has its place in Darby's story (especially his odd, indecipherable lyrics) as do his desperately closeted gay proclivities, furious drug consumption, flippant anti-Semitic remarks and willingness to test the fibre of his own body at the drop of a broken beer bottle.

Many among *We Got The Neutron Bomb*'s cast of characters turn up once again in the course of *Lexicon Devil*'s cautionary tale. More than a few quotes are shared between the two volumes, though this should by no means be construed as lazy scholarship. Given the root impulse of many Masque regulars to steer for the ditch whenever possible, it's all the more impressive that Mullen et al were able to cull sufficient testimony to fill one book, let alone two. (This could also justify the extensive and wearying scatological asides from manager and perennial pop lamprey Kim Fowley, of whom a little goes a long way.) Angeleno punks wore their nihilism like a badge of honour; it's not surprising that the scene's mortality index should run high. More's the credit to Mullen and his crew (including original Germs drummer Don Bolles) for rounding up the survivors and rewriting the history of an unfairly denied punk rock frontier.

BILL EVANS: EVERYTHING HAPPENS TO ME: A MUSICAL BIOGRAPHY

KEITH SHADWICK

BACKBEAT PBK £14.95/$19.95

COOKIN': HARD BOP AND SOUL JAZZ 1954-65

KENNY MATHIESON

CANONGATE PBK £12.99

BY ANDY HAMILTON

The introspective and massively influential jazz pianist Bill Evans, forever known for his collaboration with Miles Davis on *Kind Of Blue*, makes a surprisingly good subject for a biography. Evans was a complex and vulnerable character, and his story is a heart-rending one – a jazz life debilitated by drug addiction and affected by tragedy, which one of his friends called "the longest suicide in history". But my first thought on hearing about Keith Shadwick's book was that it would be redundant – the late Peter Pettinger's magisterial *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings* (reviewed in *The Wire* 177) surely couldn't be surpassed. Pettinger exhaustively researched the pianist's life, while Shadwick relies on published quotations. But Shadwick focuses more on the music, about which he offers many valuable critical insights. Originally slated to appear in 1998, his book was taken over by Backbeat, who added plenty of illustrations, including an opening 32 pages of photos and reproduced album sleeves.

If anything, Shadwick is too critical. We don't want to be told – as we were by Ian Carr's biography of Keith Jarrett – that every note the pianist played was touched with genius, but where Pettinger was poetic, Shadwick's criticisms have a carping edge. He defends Evans against Cecil Taylor's putdown that he was "so uninteresting, so predictable and so lacking in vitality", describing the attack as "a peculiar combination of artistic insight and professional bitterness". But then he judges Evans's classic recordings accompanying Tony Bennett as a failure. Most important, he overstates how the pianist "was quickly left far behind the vanguard of the music", referring to "the gradual ossification of Evans's mature style".

Well, OK, Evans was truly at the cutting edge only with *Kind Of Blue* in 1958 and shortly thereafter. But he transformed the essential grammar of jazz piano, and became the model for countless later figures, including Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock. Evans's profound understanding of melodic minor harmony – possibly what Shadwick means by his "manipulation of minor seventh progressions" – formed a basis for modern jazz's sound. His miraculous re-harmonisations of saccharine show tunes like "My Foolish Heart" and "My Romance" transformed them into profound artistic utterances. Yet Shadwick glosses over this aspect of Evans's work, offering only a cursory discussion of his harmonic genius.

The trio is Evans's best known format – notably with bassist Scott La Faro and drummer Paul Motian before the bassist's death in 1961. Shadwick complains that the format often becomes routine, finding little development in his subject's work. But you could say the same about Cecil Taylor and all but a handful of the greatest jazz musicians, who having developed a mature style usually stay with it. Shadwick is right to emphasise Evan's neglected recordings with George Russell, especially the pianist's uncharacteristically avant garde contribution to *Living Time* (1972). But Evans had located a rich seam of introspective lyricism largely unexplored in jazz, and mined it throughout his career. Chiding him for his relative conservatism – even assuming that's the right term – is like asking him not to be himself.

Some of Shadwick's comments are curious, but to highlight them would be just so much carping, as his discussion has much value. He has a proper respect for the jazz piano tradition prior to Evans's development of the instrument's singing tone, in the process correcting Pettinger's classical bias. His discussion of the groundbreaking *Conversations With Myself*, multitracked for three pianos, is more detailed and critically sharper than Pettinger's, drawing out the break with the documentary approach to jazz recording. Despite its faults, I learned a lot from Shadwick's very worthwhile book.

Though he matured while it was developing, Bill Evans has only tenuous connections with the style known as hard bop. Kenny Mathieson's ongoing chronicle of the history of modern jazz continues into the hard bop era with *Cookin'*. The new volume traces the earthy simplification of bebop indebted to blues and sanctified church idioms, and epitomised by the Blue Note label. The late David Rosenthal's classic *Hard Bop* qualified the assumption that jazz ceased to be a popular music with the arrival of bebop – arguing that soul replaced jazz for the black audience at the end of the 1960s, as much as rock siphoned off the music's listeners. Hard bop and soul jazz were some of the most popular forms of modern jazz before its commercial decline and – arguably – final transformation from a vernacular into an art music. Mathieson is both more exhaustive and less original than Rosenthal, as he would probably admit. The approach is conventionally biographical, an updating of the *Jazz Masters* series.

He begins with the founders of hard bop, Art Blakey and Horace Silver, moving on to such popular figures as Cannonball Adderley, Jimmy Smith and Wes Montgomery. The allocation of space is democratic, where perhaps it could have reflected artistic merit more. The most interesting musicians covered all died young, some cruelly so – Booker Little, Booker Ervin, Tina Brooks and Serge Chaloff. But the reader soon skates over the many 'solid' sessions by figures such as Lou Donaldson, Donald Byrd and Wynton Kelly. Still, there's a mass of engrossing detail here: it's interesting to discover that Eddie Harris experimented with a saxophone fitted with a trumpet mouthpiece, and a trumpet fitted with a reed. Such details make Mathieson's book richly informative about a period of jazz that, for good or ill, exerts a continuing influence on the music.

Stockholm's EMS studio, 1968

SOUNDART: THE SWEDISH SCENE
TEDDY HULTBERG
SVENSK MUSIK PBK KR200

BY PHILIP CLARK

SoundArt: The Swedish Scene is a vibrant account of the continuing Swedish art tradition that begins with the assumption that music is dead and its salvation lies in a politically rigorous engagement with the visual arts and theatre. Published by the Swedish Music Information Centre, Teddy Hultberg's well-informed, if at times too reverential text is accompanied by a generous selection of photographs and two CDs that between them give an indication of how the works discussed might translate into the live arena. Hultberg's long introductory chapter is a comprehensive summary of the aesthetics of noise, written with considerable panache, that namechecks Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin before paying meaningful attention to the influence of the Italian Futurists and John Cage on Swedish sound art.

"Ancient life was all silence," Luigi Russolo wrote in his 1913 *Art Of Noises* manifesto. "In the 19th century, with the invention of machines, Noise was born. Today, Noise is triumphant and reigns sovereign over the sensibility of men." By 1937, Cage was arguing for a rejection of the term 'music' in favour of 'organisation of sound'. By the mid-60s, a distinctive group of Swedish artists including Åke Hodell, Bo-Anders Persson and the electronic composers centred around Stockholm's EMS studio (see *The Wire* 210) were grappling to make sense of these ideals. The categories of expression highlighted by Hultberg suggests that Cage's ideas remain a potent source – perhaps *the* source – of inspiration for this Swedish scene. Text-sound composition, soundscapes, installations, live electronics and real-time collaging of slides evolve naturally from his example, and each of the figures considered here to a lesser or greater extent lines up behind him.

Cage's abiding strength was his conceptual virtuosity. His pieces never sold his written pronouncements short, but it would be silly to pretend that all the people Hultberg discusses walk the walk as well as they talk the talk. Music by electronic composer Thomas Bjelkeborn has attempted to "achieve communication with intelligent life in space" no less, and Hultberg suggests that his music would fit well into Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. In practice, however, his *TOF. daughter* fails to lift off. Unable to remove itself from the more prosaic syntax of electroacoustic composition, it sounds oddly polite. Equally, when members of the 'action' group Son Of God claim that they want their work to "infuse people with power and courage", and that their stuff is "violent" and "risky", it's difficult to square their declarations with the rather commonplace material experienced on the CD.

At the other end of the scale is the extraordinarily pure vision of saxophonist and noise composer Dror Feiler. Feiler writes that we become "deaf and musically unconscious when we hear nothing but perfect harmony, perfect structures, just new academism, repetition and its refrain". His *Mass Act II* achieves a new sort of perfection in which his concepts are entirely woven into the fabric of his sound, without the need for superfluous embellishment. It opens with a craggy wall of electronic sound that shocks and repels with the sheer intensity of its blackness. Then "it develops to a point where it goes beyond itself", he writes, as the listener begins to perceive the individual layers of sound that make up the whole. It's a perfect structure precisely because there is no structure. Like a white canvas, its extreme stance obliterates in order to re-engage with its own material.

If you're prepared to suspend your disbelief and accept that you're listening to the sound of washing machines, then Kent Tankred's *This Is A Revelation* is equally inspiring. Hultberg describes Tankred's trips to rubbish tips to find discarded household items, commenting that his elevation of kitchen utensils to sound objects liberates them from the dowdy lot life has thrown at them. The mechanical whirring acquires a surprising level of pathos, though calling it an "electrically singing mushroom forest" is perhaps too whimsical.

A similar serious playfulness pervades the work of Staffan Mossenmark, notorious for composing a piece for 100 motorbikes. His *Enjoy The Simple Life!* is a satire on consumerism and the 'off the peg' virtual world of the Internet. Mossenmark has recorded the sounds of himself enduring such everyday activities as jogging, taking a shower and brushing his teeth. Readers are invited to write in for copies, so they can enjoy jogging from the comfort of an armchair or showering without getting wet. Mossenmark's fear that we like experiences to be handed to us without having to seek them out for ourselves neatly encapsulates the crisis of our postmodern age. In that context, the approach of Christian Bock and Sten Hanson is more parody than critique. Bock's text-sound work *The Washington Trials* replaces Bertolt Brecht's answers to the Un-American Senate Committee with smug overblown film music, while Hanson strips naked and is tied to a chair, while the sounds of torture play in the background. Both pieces play to the gallery and create a powerful theatrical impression. But they're just that: an impression, whereas the works of Feiler, Tankred and Mossenmark offer undiluted and powerful aesthetic experiences. □

BACK IN THE DAYS
JAMEL SHABAZZ
POWERHOUSE HBK $35

BY HUA HSU

It's true what they say: good pictures are indeed worth 1000 words. Since this collection of Brooklyn photographer Jamel Shabazz's impressions of 1980s New York street culture has little accompanying explanation, that's just as well. Though there are essays from consummate Old School figure Fab 5 Freddy and noted HipHop photojournalist Ernie Paniccioli, *Back In The Days* is largely devoid of narration. Subjects go unnamed, dates are left unidentified, leaving incidental street signs or familiar subway cars as the only temporal or spatial markers. The temptation is to read sociology where no such intention exists: the only thing Shabazz attempts to report are "the best years" of a generation before the incursions of AIDS and crack, before HipHop became the *only* style. "The camera," he explains in a brief author's note, "enabled me to tell a person how special and valuable they were and I had hoped that I could encourage people to look toward their own futures and believe in themselves."

Shabazz's photos imply the vibrant HipHop culture that flourished as 1980s New York floundered, but other than the occasional 12" sleeve or Whodini belt, the connection is left openended. The portraits are as much about the personal poses, styles and profiles, as they are about the backgrounds and juxtaposition. Kids smile as though everything's fair, even as they stand in front of dilapidated storefronts that suggest otherwise. It's no coincidence that Shabazz has been working on a related film called *Back In The Days: A Time Before Crack*.

But for all the aging brownstones, encroaching cops and corner hustles happening slightly outside each frame, there's a genuine feeling of pride, joy and even optimism in Shabazz's portraits. His subjects inhabit that tenuous moment of possibility, the idea that we make the most of what we can, given limited resources and an uncertain future. Though the kids aren't necessarily escapists, there's something to be said about losing oneself in the micromanaged details of the present – it gives them freedom, if only for a blink of time. They champion their T-shirts like theirs alone were the slickest in the world; caps are so meticulously tipped that minute degrees of rotation delineate cool from fool. If everyone wears the same Cazal shades, not everyone wears them well. Most of all, his subjects actually smile.

If the totality of images were to converge to tell a single story, it would be one about love. It is made explicit in the book's only candid shot – a young couple kissing in a doorway, his hands cupping her denim rear – but an ethic of believing and taking pride in oneself outlines each smile. It's tempting to read the minor league materialism on display here as an antecedent to today's HipHop's fascination with platinum and luxury, except the displayed possessions signify a different dynamic: love for *self* against love of stuff. Like the music that later captivated these neighbourhoods, the flash Shabazz shines is improvisational and quickwitted. His pictures are about making a mesh cap or a wifebeater undershirt into the truest thing on the block. A woman with a studded Whodini belt hops on a park table and stands proudly with arms akimbo, as though the entire park is her dominion and the table her pedestal. Three writers show off their stunning, newly styled denim jackets, the conviction in their eyes suggesting that their bubble letters, characters and painting will only get better. Here and there, a gaptoothed kid flashes a fistful of dollars – and you can only guess where they came from. Somewhat eerily, much of this book could easily double as fashion spreads showcasing today's throwback tastes. Instead of hard, disaffected looks, however, you get deeply personal styles and smiles. When cast against their contexts, these smiles become defiant. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. Edited by Anne Hilde Neset

Digital dinosaurs. The world's first arcade game *Computer Space* (1971); early 80s Commodore and Sinclair computers; the remarkably lifelike *Pong*

A new exhibition of videogames scores high on the music content, says Ken Hollings

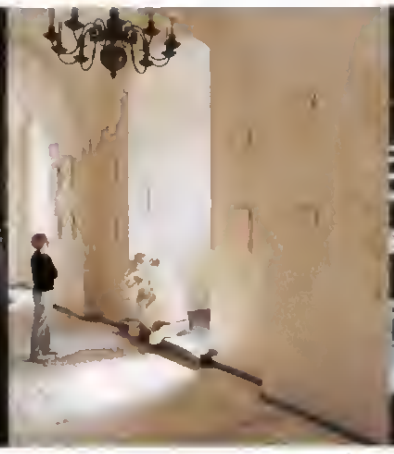
All games, whether played against machines or human opponents, are forms of behavioural software. The more sophisticated the program involved, the less perceptible the separation between player and game. Very few, however, can be run in silence. Random noise, wild kinetic motion and the audiovisual scrambling of information are vital by-products of the gaming urge. Hence the densely streamed and coded chaos that hits you at the start of this vastly entertaining exhibition at the Barbican in the City of London. Charting the past, present and future of the videogame, Game On: The History And Culture Of Videogames presents history as sensory assault: 40 years of flashing lights, high speed electronic displays and relentless fanfares all packed into the ultimate interactive environment. It's not surprising, therefore, to discover that computer chess, one of the earliest examples of machine intelligence aver to gather social acceptance, is conspicuous by its absence. All that quiet deliberation and sober reflection would have no place in a games arcade, one of the few locations on earth where those hungry for noise and adventure can still safely run wild. Pride of place goes instead to the first arcade game, *Computer Space*, produced in 1971 by Nolan Bushnell. Despite an elegantly futuristic piece of cabinet design, the game proved too difficult to play and was a commercial flop. It did, however, establish the basic combination of video monitor, circuit board, control panel, loudspeaker and power supply that has remained relatively unchanged in arcade games to this day. Bushnell then went on to found Atari, the company that dominated gaming culture throughout the 1970s and probably had a greater impact on teenage consciousness than *Star Wars* and The Sex Pistols put together.

Starting with *Pong*, a basic serve and return tennis game that played liked it sounded, Atari used a simple joystick and that inbuilt speaker to get real loud real fast. By the time Taito's *Space Invaders* was introduced to the US market in 1978, cultural adrenalin levels were soaring. A gradually accelerating robotic pulse accompanied this early 'slide and shoot' encounter with raster graphic alien blobs, heightening both tension and response times. The effect was highly addictive. Sleep was now only for the weak, the police imposed curfews on many arcades, and Yellow Magic Orchestra had a massive hit with "Space Invaders". As so often happens when restless youth and corporate enterprise get together, panic set in, and it's never really gone away.

Which possibly explains why such obvious care has been taken in the layout and arrangement of this show. Visitors may have free access to pit themselves noisily against many of the more durable exhibits, thereby providing Game On with its own uniquely bustling soundtrack, but a closely argued line of thought still links each display. The videogame's prehistory section leads into a brief examination of the major names and machines dominating its development from the 1980s to the present day, including the Commodore 64, Nintendo's Game Boy, The Sony PlayStation and the Xbox. Beyond that lies a fabulous array of recent games, set out in a glowing curved arena and arranged by category, the basic taxonomy of 'Thought Games', 'Action Games' and 'Simulation Games' supplied by French taxonomists the Le Diberder brothers in their book, *L'Univers Des Jeux Video*. Personal faves on offer here were the extravagantly manic and pointless *Bust A Move IV* and the cheerful rhyming inanities of *Parappa The Rapper*. Go, street!

Such classification does have its purposes. Curators Conrad Bodman and Lucien King seem less concerned with the cybernetics of pop culture delirium than they are with its aesthetics. "We hope," they write in their general introduction, "that this exhibition will be the first of many to show games design as a creative field which stands alongside music, cinema and the visual arts." It's ironic, therefore, that some of the quietest zones in the entire show should be found upstairs, where the broader issues of the videogame's complex relationship to art and technology are addressed. The most peaceful and orderly of them all turns out to be, unsurprisingly, devoted entirely to music. Sets of listening posts hook you up to three basic forms of gaming soundtrack. One is reserved entirely for the expansive cinematic compositions of Koichi Sugiyama, the first composer to cram an entire orchestra onto a console, and Richard Jacques, whose work on *Daytona CCE* and *Jet Set Radio* places him unashamedly alongside such grand library music illuminati as Jack Arel and Alan Hawkshaw. Another gives you a basic megastore tracklisting of games music from such already established names as The Chemical Brothers, Orbital and The Prodigy for the groundbreaking 1995 release *Wipeout*, plus newer material from Coldcut, Gorillaz and Omni Trio, including the latter's brutal theme for the awesomely antisocial *Grand Theft Auto III*. The third set of headphones, however, takes you right back to the heady thrills of the mid-80s with a dizzying selection of classic themes and effects programmed for the SID sound chip, which provided the Commodore 64 with its unmistakable sparkling cadences and grungy electro fuzz accompaniment. To add further ballast to their arguments, Bodman and King have included specially commissioned pieces by artists and composers such as Scanner & Friendchip, Nina Pope & Karen Guthrie and Lise Autogena & Joshua Portway. The most memorable is Mark Dean's *Insert Coin*, in which black and white war footage is run against an endless loop of Nico intoning lines from The Velvet Underground's "I'll Be Your Mirror".

Although the exhibition catalogue, edited by King, manages to deal adeptly with some of the broader issues of strategy, violence, role play and gender, as well as marketing and character design, it provides little useful information on just how closely music and videogames are connected. This is doubly unfortunate since many of the personal accounts it contains relating players' own experiences of gaming touch repeatedly on the close relationship between the two. As contributor Jeremy Ralph freestyles neatly in his personal memoir of a game-saturated youth: "Videogames run through my life like the music I listen to." There's something in the videogame's glorious mix of disposable excess and high end playability, best summed up in the expression 'thumb candy', that allows it to exist in a constant state of flux, both socially and culturally. Such a condition has come increasingly to constitute a choice between the quick and the dead. Playability, after all, is a concept that links both games and music to machines. Our relationship to all three remains a pressing matter of historical concern. In the meantime, *Barcode Battler* anyone? ☐ *Game On runs at London Barbican Gallery until 15 September. Website: www.gameonweb.co.uk*



Above: Christian Marclay's *Video Quartet 2002*. Right and far right: Christina Kubisch with her *Governors* and *Diapason* installations at Berlin's Parochialkirche

SAMPLING/CHRISTIAN MARCLAY
SAN FRANCISCO MOMA
USA

BY SEETA PENA GANGADHARAN

At his new solo exhibition at San Francisco's prestigious Museum of Modern Art, sound artist and experimental turntablist par excellence Christian Marclay has added a new densely layered film piece to his already vast repertoire Running on four screens and lasting 13 minutes, *Video Quartet 2002* uses musical scenes, scores and sound effects as the source of its composition Scouring a wide selection of Hollywood musicals, film noir, epic drama and documentaries for visual samples, Marclay layers clips of all manner of musical and sonic activity Screams, piano playing, scat phrases, splashes, whistle blowing and other sound design cuttings are composed into an entirely new musical piece performed by this sampled ensemble on celluloid

Preserving the original sound from each clip, Marclay fills up the four screens with complementary images such as a roulette wheel spinning on one screen, a bag of coins falling on the other, an alarm clock ringing and the flipping of playing cards The rhythm of shifting images and sounds remains consistent, and is perforated by quieter moments such as feathers falling, and other images suggesting silence Every now and again, Marclay heightens the intensity by staggering a loop of the same clip across the four screens or coupling a shot and its counter-shot at the same time

The effect is mesmerising Throughout *Video Quartet*'s entire 13 minutes, it's impossible to tire of the visual and aural barrage, and with each repeat viewing, a new narrative seems to surface. It is a sensuous listening experience and a game all at once, implicitly challenging the viewer to identify the 100 or so films included in the work and to mentally piece together these images through recognition of film titles, starlets and jingles This is the stuff of our collective memory From *Fiddler On The Roof* and *Casablanca* to *Bird* and *Short Cuts*, *Video Quartet 2002* appeals to the viewer's selective recollection

"The visual narrative is as important as the sound composition," Marclay tells me. "They are inseparable." Unlike traditional film editing, which alters and intensifies sound effects, he explains, "The challenge in making this musical piece was to edit to the sound first, without ever forgetting the image If a usable sound was not attached to a usable image, the clip was discarded."

The notion of a video composed with sounds of film has been taken up by a later generation of video artists such as Emergency Broadcast Network (EBN), Jeroen Hofs (aka Eboman), and Martin Arnold In the early 90s, EBN critiqued the political economy of media with their plunderphonic celluloid cut-ups, ratcheting mainstream news and entertainment into repetitious nonsense More recently, Holland's Eboman has been subverting Hollywood imagery through his 'Sample Madness' projects that feature live video mixing of iconic scenes or personalities. Vienna's Martin Arnold takes a less politicised approach, focusing on a singular editing technique which emulates the process of sonic granular synthesis: a length of film is manipulated frame by frame and stretched out into hundreds of repetitions.

But unlike the jarring activism of EBN and Eboman or Arnold's precision manipulations, Marclay's work is focused on winkling out alternative audio narratives which he perceives embedded within film stock The precursor to *Video Quartet*, *Telephone* (1995), ridicules Hollywood's over-use of the telephone by collaging a series of scenes featuring phones ringing or characters engaged in long-distance conversations

Two of Marclay's earlier works, *Tape Fall* (1989) and *Up And Out* (1998) are also featured in the MoMA show *Tape Fall* consists of a single-reel tape machine playing back the sounds of dripping water while the tape slowly unravels from the spool, dribbling into a spaghetti-like puddle on the gallery floor The piece evokes Fluxus artist George Brecht's late 50s *Drip Music* series Influenced by the chance operations of John Cage, Brecht's first effort involved a tap arranged to drip into an empty vessel Marclay, a former Fluxus devotee, repeats Brecht's exercise by replacing the dripping water with a dribbling tape recorder reproducing a series of plops

Up And Out isolates sound by crossbreeding Michelangelo Antonioni's swingin' London classic *Blow Up* with Brian De Palma's Reagan-era conspiracy movie *Blow Out* In a simple but telling gesture, Marclay superimposes the soundtrack of *Blow Out* on top of *Blow Up*'s photoplay, forcing a physical connection between two films that allegedly have historical ties (*Blow Out* was partly a tribute to Antonioni). The result yields uncomfortable dissonance in one instant and humorous synchronicity in the next

Marclay and his art have been all over San Francisco recently At last year's Sounds Of Christmas, presented at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, local Bay Area electronic musicians, including the likes of Blevin Blectum and Sutekh, were invited to remix Marclay's extensive personal collection of Christmas records over projections of the albums' sleeve art The recent group show, Rock My World Recent Art And The Memory Of Rock 'N' Roll at California College of Arts and Crafts, included the well-known piece *Guitar Drag* (1999), where an electric guitar is dragged after a pick-up truck loaded with a feeding back amplifier. Given Marclay's prodigious activity, Sampling/Christian Marclay begs for a larger retrospective of a career that stretches back to the mid-70s According to Benjamin Weil, MoMA's curator of Media Arts, such a project is indeed in the works ☐ *Sampling/Christian Marclay continues until 28 July. For more info see www.sfmoma.com*

CHRISTINA KUBISCH: THIRTY-THREE FIELDS
BERLIN PAROCHIALKIRCHE
GERMANY

BY MAGNUS HAGLUND

Some two or three hundred metres from Berlin's Alexanderplatz, in Klosterstrasse, stands the beautiful Baroque Parochialkirche, built in 1703 As a visitor, you can only imagine what the church must have originally looked like inside, as the interior was completely destroyed during the second world war, and the tower with its famous carillon has long since collapsed There's now an intriguing, deserted feeling about the place, with its brickwork exposed and all ornamentation stripped out With this overarching emptiness, austerity, ruins and residues of former grandeur, it's a perfect site for German sound artist Christina Kubisch's installations

Since 1996, curators Carsten Seiffarth and Susanne Binas have been running the Singuhr-Hörgalerie in the church, presenting sonic installations by such artists as Alvin Lucier, Carsten Nicolai, Terry Fox, Rolf Julius and Manos Tsangaris The latest, Thirty-Three Fields (Dreiunddreissig Felder), is a solo exhibition encompassing three ambitious new pieces by Kubisch, which explore the resonating memories of those who are commemorated in the church's empty shell, as well as making the most of the sense of abandoned splendour which haunts this desolate space

Her first piece, *Four Tablets* (*Vier Tafeln*), is located in the church's entrance hall: digitised voices read out texts of four epitaphs in Latin, French and German. This contemporary reproductive technique is employed to intone historical texts concerning the victims and casualties of the Napoleonic wars. The room's echoing acoustic makes the passing voices float into each other, causing the texts inscribed on the walls to come alive The effect is subtle the space appears to be an ordinary church entrance at first, but on closer inspection of the epitaphs you start to hear the voices and the atmosphere alters

Ascending a set of old wooden stairs, you are confronted with the next piece, *Governors* (*Statthalter*) Where portraits of all the former church ministers used to hang, there remain only bare patches and plates containing the names of the ministers, the years of their births and deaths, and the time they served in the church Here, Kubisch has concealed 26 loudspeakers under light, white canvases reminiscent of the Agnes Martin's minimalist paintings (the dedicatee of John Zorn's composition *Redbird*). The speakers emit voices reading out the names and dates from the plates The 26 texts, all read simultaneously in German in the same male voice, create a stream of depersonalised sounds In John Cage's words, "We are living in the world of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* Here comes everyone." Memories of the priests are converted into names and numbers pure sounds with no hierarchy in their organisation

The last piece, *Diapason*, takes place in the darkness of the belfry Three fields of small, white speakers are arranged in rows on the floor lit by ultraviolet lamps The quiet atmosphere is altered by the light, bringing a sharp focus on the acoustic objects The speakers emit microsounds (acoustic recordings of tuning forks) with the peculiarly naive qualities of a glockenspiel From a position in the middle of the room, it is impossible to determine from where the sounds are coming and in which order But slowly the disparate tones begin to sound like hidden melodies, evoking the ghost of the collapsed carillon, complemented by the background drone

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Stills from Autechre's "Gantz Graf" and Takagi Masakatsu's *opus pia* DVDs

of Alexanderplatz's buzzing traffic

Only after spending some time in the belfry and diving into the contemplative sensibility of *Diapason*, that one understands the deep connections between Kubisch's three installations. The three components of Thirty-Three Fields make up one complete piece, a visionary space with several passages, a work that has as much to do with the memory systems of the site and its visitors, as with the actual acoustics of the church

There is a striking correspondence between Thirty Three Fields and an earlier Kubisch piece from 1996, *About Silence* (*Über Die Stille*), where ultraviolet light, emitting from banknote-authenticating machines, illuminates plexiglass printed with fragments of Romantic poetry short sentences using the word 'silence' taken from writers such as Eichendorff, Goethe and Rilke

In both works a fusion takes place between art and nature, between artificial sound systems and the 'real' sounds belonging to the site in question The visitor experiences the layering between present and past time, between a nature existing independently of human interaction and the idea of culture as an open reference system ☐ *Info www.singuhr.de*

AUTECHRE
GANTZ GRAF
WARP WAP56 DVD

BY ANNE HILDE NESET

Apart from the usual Hollywood barrage, DVD film production is currently experiencing a long awaited surge in independent productions, largely due to the kind of cheap technology that fuelled Skiz Fernando's self-financed feature *Crooked* (see page 24). This DVD accompanying Autechre's new *Gantz Graf* single – the Sheffield electronica duo's first ever visuals collection – features the brand new video for the title track, as well as two older promos for 1993's "Basscadet" and 1995's "Second Bad Vilbel" Directed by digital film maker Alexander Rutterford, the complex 3D animation for "Gantz Graf" is a slick affair featuring a hubcap-like metal object spinning, pulsing and twitching to the track's awkward, juddering anti-rhythms In keeping with Autechre's earlier sleeve art design (think of those sinister steel components on the *Tri Repetae* sleeve come alive), the glossy visuals are crafted with a large dose of technical skill (apparently 90 per cent of the film was animated by hand) Autechre's aesthetic has always been far away from a flimsy DIY/lo-fi approach and this smooth animation, if a little predictable, certainly befits the duo's fascination for industrial processes and futuristic technologies The second featured video, "Basscadet", directed by graphic whiz Jess Scott-Hunter, appeared originally on Warp's groundbreaking 1994 *Artificial Intelligence* video compilation Even though the sci-fi animation of floating spaceships à la Stanley Kubrick's *2001* is less technically sophisticated than "Gantz Graf", it shows Autechre's aesthetic of mechanical dystopia, dark sci-fi and urban landscapes hasn't moved on much in the last eight years "Second Bad Vilbel" is a new version of the existing Chris Cunningham video made for a track which originally appeared on *Tri Repetae* The disjointed, grainy images of an insectoid robot (designed by Cunningham himself), seen through a surveillance camera, make for disturbing viewing.

TAKAGI MASAKATSU
OPUS PIA
CARPARK 16 DVD

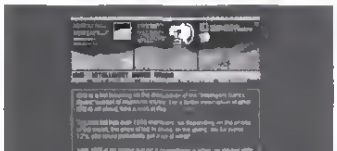
BY ANNE HILDE NESET

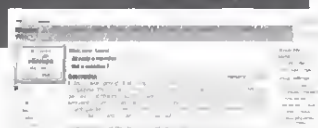
In stark contrast to Autechre's bleak retro-futuristic images, 23 year old multimedia artist Takagi Masakatsu has collected idyllic images from his travels around the world on this collection of enigmatic video works "Tiny miracles in the daily life", comments Masakatsu on the back of the sleeve, explaining the slightly whimsical concept behind these sampled moments Originally collected for an exhibition put together by sound art curator Minoru Hatanaka in Tokyo summer 2001, *opus pia* consists of 11 short movies containing mostly unprocessed images close-ups of water drops, flickering grass, children orbiting on a roundabout, sunshine reflected in water These elegiac travelogues are accompanied by Masakatsu's gentle electronic soundtrack, explained in the sleevenotes as "the first computermusic of me". Somewhere between Terre Thaemlitz and Dval, his abstract processed piano chimes, soft white-noise purrs, mousy squeaks and resonating bell jingles roll repetitively, keeping the soundtrack on the interesting end of Ambient music The only point where the sound actually interacts with the film is on "opus #4", depicting children running around the artist in a playground, asking what he has in his hand, before mockingly repeating his answer "Videocamera! Videocamera!"

Go To:

The DroneOn Mailing List

Frequently Asked Questions Page





It's good to talk, and there are certain lists out there on the Net worth emailing home about Start with **The Wire Mailing List** (groups.yahoo.com/group/thewire) Set up independently from this magazine, it's the first port of call for discussing anything that falls under the impossibly broad banner "adventurous music" Reader, this is your playground Recent topics have included primers on Marion Brown, the pronunciation of Frederic Rzewski's name, favourite ECM releases, and thoughts about Martin Tétreault's Turntable Hell CMN tour of the UK Because many posters were using this solely as a promotional forum (upcoming gigs, radio playlists, sale lists),a separate **Wire Announcement List** (groups.yahoo.com/group/thewire-announcements) has been set up to catch postings of a more commercial/spamlike nature

Originally a Spacemen 3 fanclub, **Drone-On** (www.droneon.org) has come to include anything somewhat psychedelic and/or mind-numbing equipment to create drones, Texas psychedelic music, summer reading lists, Dead C recommendations and 'fun things to do in Atlanta and Montréal' have come up as of late Not exactly a tightly knit aesthetic, then, but plenty of useful information is circulated with a minimal dose of snooty bullshit Though sporting his name, the **Zorn List** (mailman.xmission.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/zorn-list) does not solely exist around the exploits of John Z Rather, this is a celebration of the downtown New York experimental music scene, Tzadik label, and associated matters – of late, the Victoriaville Festival, Zorn/Arto Lindsay collaborations, and Andrew Hill's big band have been discussed and dissected Easily one of the most intelligent music communities online, even if the occasional flare-up resorts to petty psycho-squabbles that would be best left in the schoolyard

While all forms of electronica from Gabba to Goa, Detroit to Dutch Techno get their own mailing lists at **Hyperreal** (hyperreal.org), the most active and famous of all their discussion groups must surely be **IDM (Intelligent Dance Music)** (music.hyperreal.org/lists/idm) Even with a daily digest, be prepared to be pummelled by an onslaught of posts about Richard D James and his progeny As befits the music, a much calmer discussion group from the Hyperreal family is the **Ambient** list (music.hyperreal.org/lists/ambient) As on IDM, there's plenty of fascinating arcana here Not if you're enamoured of Steve Roach, Vidna Obmana the Fax label, Dan Abrams, Susumu Yokota and Dumb Type

Hardly typical itself, **Typical Girls** (*www.topica.com/lists/typicalgirls*) takes its name from a Slits song The wonderful world of Riot Grrrls and their spiritual mums are hashed about in this environment. Anyone obsessed with Delta 5, Kleenex/Liliput, Lydia Lunch, Bikini Kill, Kill Rock Stars and Essential Logic, look no further. Though sporting too many announcement postings, **Musicthoughts** (groups.yahoo.com/group/musicthoughts) remains a lively discussion of music and advice for lonely entertainers, which is just as instructive for fans and the non-musically inclined alike, including rock critics explaining themselves, recent payola scandals, trading Real Audio files, shopping for drums and the best CD replication services Set up in May, **Veinmelterspacejazz** (groups.yahoo.com/group/veinmelterspacejazz) announced itself under the imaginative banner "Adventures In Modern Music" (where have we heard that before?). It promises to remain almost entirely unmediated, and appeals to fans of "passionate" and "experimental" sounds "Music that they feel passionate about because in some way it is, to them, true to what music is" Er, OK then

Some lists are little more than grapevines and rumour mills **Rocking Vicar** (www.rockingvicar.com) lets you find out about (and contribute) the quirks and foibles of your favourite musicians – as long as the site's functioning A more prurient version is the message board attached to **Groupie Central** (www.groupiecentral.com). Go to www.voy.com/16357/ to find a sprawling archive of rumours, first-to-fourth hand experiences, gossip and salacious descriptions of the sexual proclivities (or not) of a wide range of pop musicians from Led Zeppelin to Julian Cope, Trent Reznor Henry Rollins and Radiohead

Meanwhile, if the egalitarian spirit of the Net inspires you to moderate your own little cyberworld, there are plenty of places to set up your own list: try **Freelists** (www.freelists.org), **Topica** (www.topica.com/create), **Quick Topic** (www.quicktopic.com) and **Yahoo! Groups** (groups.yahoo.com)

JASON GRDSS

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE MUSIQUE ACTUELLE
VICTORIAVILLE VARIOUS VENUES
CANADA

BY CHRISTOPH COX

Victoriaville is an unremarkable little town in a drab patch of rural Québec. But for 19 years now, it has been the site of North America's largest and most eminent festival of improvised and experimental music. From its inception, the Festival International de Musique Actuelle has attracted the big guns of free music along with some younger torch bearers for the tradition. Over the past five years or so, spurred largely by burgeoning scenes in Montréal (a two hour drive away), FIMAV has expanded its brief to include samplings of leftfield rock and electronica, rubbing up against the programming for Montréal's MUTEK and Suoni Per Il Populo Festivals, which take place shortly after.

This year's festival followed suit, boasting 26 acts that ranged from Cecil Taylor, Konrad Bauer, and William Parker to Scanner, Set Fire To Flames, Merzbow, and Pan Sonic. On paper it looked like an intriguing spread that promised exciting new conjunctions and mixtures. But, as the programme played out, the juxtapositions only highlighted what a sedentary middle-aged tradition improvised music has become. It may once have meant an encounter with the outside that drove players into wild, unknown spaces. But, as FIMAV 2002 amply demonstrated, it's now protected turf, a fenced-in territory full of stock moves, materials, and techniques. Fortunately, the festival had other things to offer. Its real delights were provided by artists who work miles away from Improv territory and by those who invade it from without.

The fest opened with the world premiere of Montreal's Mruta Mertsi, a 17-voice choir augmented with guitar, cello, and percussion, and directed by electric bassist Andre Pappathomas. The ensemble ran through a dozen compositions that melded Verdi, Tibetan throat singing, and Schwitters-like glossolalia on top of mournful cello, angular guitar, and scattered percussion. Though fairly entertaining, it shared with several other big acts at FIMAV (notably Keith Tippett's big band and Annie Gosfield's Industrial quintet) a cloyingly slick and boastfully eclectic sensibility that overwhelmed its merits. The quartet of Fred Frith, Larry Ochs, Miya Masaoka, and former Kronos cellist Jean Jeanrenaud took the big stage as the first evening's headliner. Ochs twittered jazz lines on sopranino over Frith's bellowing feedback and a muddle of strings. Generally battling one another without any real engagement, the quartet played most coherently when it gave itself enough space to hear the individual elements.

Things really got going on the second day, when the festival was suddenly raided by backpack-toting hitchhikers from Montréal who had arrived just in time to see the debut live performance of citymates Set Fire To Flames. On a dimly-lit stage, amid strewn heaps of equipment, the scrappy 15-piece let loose a torrent of concrète noise, turntable loops, mournful strings, and ferocious percussion, while enigmatic images of bridges, highways, and angelic bodies vibrated on the makeshift screen looming overhead. An hour later, Lee Ranaldo, Alan Licht, Ulrich Kneger, DJ Olive, and William Hooker presented a kindred extravaganza of sound and sight: an improvised soundtrack to Stan Brakhage's classic experimental film Dog Star Man. Ranaldo, Licht, and Kneger grounded the set with ringing drones and howls, encircled by Olive's warbling vinyl, and accented by Hooker's syncopated rattling. But Brakhage was the real star with his cinema of delirious abstraction and viscous flesh. Capping off the festival's loudest day, Japanese noisecore trio Melt Banana shot out ear-shattering rounds of spastic stop-start guitars and yapping monosyllabic vocals. Goofy and deeply satisfying, their performance highlighted something palpably absent from the often flabby Improv sets: the tight control of noise and electricity.

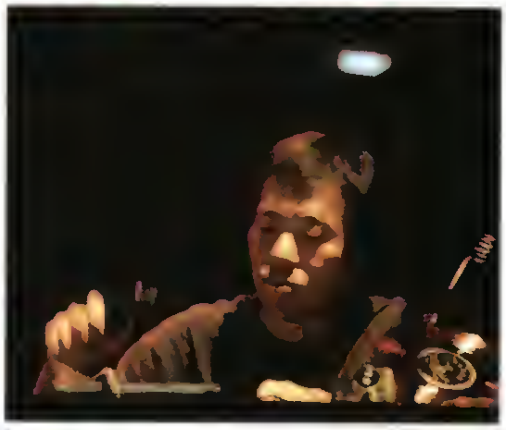
The next afternoon, as if to continue the argument, compatriots Satoko Fujii and Tatsuya Yoshida thrillingly demonstrated the virtues of Speed Metal Improv. The piano/drums duo threw itself headlong into a wild and bogglingly precise exchange of hammering percussion and jabbering voices – part battle, part hyperactive dance. A flawless composite of jumpcuts, the set spanned the musical map from hardcore and Metal to boogie woogie and tango, ending with a hilarious impromptu rendition of "The Girl From Ipanema". On the other end of the auditory spectrum, Austrian microscopists Polwechsel offered up a lovely collection of little sounds. Via gurgling sax, evanescent guitar, quietly droning bass, and gently scraped cello, the tones fell like light rain on a sombre afternoon. Polwechsel's exquisite restraint was matched by the Australian trio The Necks, who baffled the crowd with their low-key, genre-defying brand of minimalism. Bass, drums, and piano repeated simple patterns that slowly drifted, creating lovely loops that seduced and hypnotised like the sound of rolling surf.

The masters of free improvisation held the floor for most of the penultimate day. Peter Kowald and William Parker's duo set thrilled the audience, but its merits were almost entirely lost on this listener. The two bassists relentlessly chugged along beside one another generating an indulgent, muscular mess that lacked subtlety and any sense of dialogue. Oluyemi Thomas and Alan Silva fared better. Beginning with a lovely incantation, their duo sustained a mysterious and ceremonial feel, with Thomas's shawm and bass clarinet weaving meandering threads through Silva's soulful bass. Shortly after, Eugene Chadbourne and René Lussier broke up all the heavy seriousness with a loose set of hillbilly improv that was by turns clever, beautiful, and annoyingly clowny. Scheduled to climax the day – and the festival – the trio of Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, and Tony Oxley instead delivered the festival's biggest dud. Taylor played as though he had somewhere else to be, passionlessly doling out his signature stabs and runs, which Oxley duly mimicked. Dixon bleated out a few notes here and there – pleasant enough, but insubstantial and unremarkable. Following the trio's markedly brief performance, Taylor reluctantly returned for a two-minute encore. Lyrical and abstract, it was certainly the most satisfying few minutes of the show. Still scratching their heads, the crowd headed off to the day's final performance, a political comedy featuring Bob Ostertag and Pierre Hébert. Ostertag sampled himself opening a can of Coke and eating potato chips while Pierre Hébert scribbled and shot an astonishing piece of live animation full of ravenous cartoony monsters and ominous circling airplanes. The piece was amusing, engrossing, and technically brilliant despite its rather flat-footed anti-consumption message.

Nearly all of the festival's live electronic music was shoved into the final day. Scanner and Stephen Vitiello started it off with a mild-mannered collage of samples from Victoriaville's fairly impoverished soundscape. Next up, the young kingpins of Montréal's Alien8 label, David Kristian, Sam Shalabi and Alexandre St Onge, took the stage for an excursion into electronic minimalism. Kristian's modular components sent out pulsing hums and fuzzy loops, while Shalabi scratched and knocked the body of an oud and St Onge bowed digitally processed drones from an upright bass. A bit fidgety and scattered, the trio's hour-long set was most satisfying when it sustained its Theater Of Eternal Music style groove. The festival's closing act, Pan Sonic vs Merzbow, was worth the long wait. Their complete absence of stage presence notwithstanding, the trio orchestrated glorious cascades of white noise that sporadically collapsed into fat dirty beats – a gut-rumbling excursion into the inner depths of sound and an indication of where the true spirit of Improv lives in 2002.

Clockwise from top left: Cecil Taylor, Melt Banana, Set Fire To Flames, Yoshida Tatsuya, Satoko Fujii, Lee Ranaldo, Pan Sonic with Merzbow

PHOTOS: MARTIN MORISSETTE



PHOTOS: TURNTABLE HELL/ SIMON LEIGH

TURNTABLE HELL
LONDON QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL
UK

BY ANNE HILDE NESET

"We are the Cartridge Family!" exclaimed an enthusiastic Martin Tétreault to a hall filled to the rafters with vinyl devotees. In the wake of Christian Marclay and Invisibl Skratch Piklz, it has become commonly accepted that turntables are instruments for generating music as well as the hi-fi connoisseur's playback machine of choice. Yet tonight's concert, organised by the Contemporary Music Network, was the first experimental turntable meeting to hit London on a large scale. Curated and conducted by Québeçois sound/installation artist Tétreault, Turntable Hell assembled eight musicians into a turntable orchestra: vinyl wrecker Paul Hood, Improv drummer and LMC stalwart Steve Noble, multi-instrumentalist and general non-conformist Lepke B, composer, installation artist and Sheer Frost Orchestra ringleader Marina Rosenfeld, triphonic turntable inventor Janek Shaefer, Sydney based electronic artist Martin Ng, and, last but not least, Otomo Yoshihide, noise maestro and turntable thrasher par excellence.

Expecting to see a series of solo sets with the possibility of a jam at the end, it was surprising to be confronted with a stage full of turntable tinkerers hunched over their tools. The first half was taken up with a single, loosely held together abstract piece. Starting as a drone of vinyl-derived whirrs and hums, it eventually peaked into a scratch frenzy before relapsing into near silence. The second half featured a series of shorter pieces, each directed by a single performer who would cue in the other musicians according to the piece's requirements, thus enforcing more of a group dynamic. Tétréault's "Pass The Loop" was like a game of Chinese whispers: as the loops passed through different performer's hands, they developed into a cacophonous murmur of spinning vinyl. Rosenfeld's bouncy and frenetic "Evil Twin" was the soundtrack for Tom & Jerry in hell. Traces of original music from the source vinyl occasionally bubbled to the surface, like repressed children out to create mayhem before the sound controller's strict regimen brought them back down to a melancholy purr.

In contrast to laptops or electronic boxes, where the source of their multilayered output is difficult to identify, the simple, unadorned turntable renders the sound source transparent for the audience, especially when cameras are positioned above each turntable as they were tonight. Multimedia artist Ben Orew controlled these real-time visuals, fading between close-ups of performers' actions and more abstract imagery. The constant broadcast of the musicians' hand movements made for a literal experience, shifting the emphasis from the poetic to the mechanics of the performance. An orchestra consisting only of one (relatively unusual) type of instrument tends to underline its novelty value rather than the music it produces. Much like the Pure release *The End Of Vinyl* (Mego), which consists of run-out grooves of various vinyl records, the production method and sound source threaten to become more important than the music itself.

By the end of the show, the stage looked like a radio theatre studio filled with engineers rustling around feverishly for the appropriate noise: breathing into microphones, cartridges drumming on the turning plate, bowing vinyl. Even so, the music stayed on the polite side. After an evening of scratching, it was left to Otomo to ease the audience's itch with a surge of raw noise. Breaking ranks with the politely seated performers and audience, he plunged the night into chaos. Holding the turntable against his waist like a guitar, he shook the turntable arm like a whammy bar in a desperate hunt for crushing feedback, before smashing down his instrument and slapping his hardshell suitcase on top of it as he left the stage. It was a refreshing gesture at the end of a night dominated by too much well tempered turntable, with too little room for the individual, energetic, Tourette-like outbursts that make Improv such a spontaneous and exhilarating music. □

CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA
LONDON HANOVER GRAND
UK

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

With its oriental lanterns, velvet curtains, deep red walls and sofas on the balcony, The Hanover Grand has gone big on period opulence, but the stage was still too small to comfortably fit the expanded Cinematic Orchestra that leader Jason Swinscoe had assembled for their London showcase featuring the legendary Art Ensemble Of Chicago soul stirrer Fontella Bass. Swinscoe discreetly positioned himself far to the left and kept partly hidden (from my vantage point) behind towers of keyboard equipment. Ninja Tune turntablist Patrick Carpenter manned his decks over on the right, and an arc of more traditionally armed instrumentalists took up the space in between. With so large an ensemble, which included bassist Phil France, seasoned sax improvisor Tom Chant, drummer Luke Flowers, keyboard player John Ellis and vocalist Niara Scarlet, it took a while before they were all properly acquainted. The first few numbers ambled along nonchalantly enough, with the orchestra patching together the hazy, hypnotic textures of mid- to late 60s jazz from ripples of moody, sustained sax notes, fluid drum rhythms and some mellifluous Rhodes soloing. A couple of longer numbers left some room for the players to get to know each other a little better with a few gentle exchanges. Cushioned by the Grand's red velvet, the effect was more than a little studied. Just when everyone was getting used to the luxury, a screen lit up for the orchestra's filmed backdrop projections. Their unlikely collage of cogs, trains, pistons, industrial landscapes, levers and dancers wasn't exactly flush, image-wise, with the plush fittings, but the modernist edge of the visuals usefully offset the music's sometimes overly studied jazz-blue moods.

However, holding onto received notions of cool were no longer a consideration after Fontella Bass made her entrance. Launching into a strong rendition of "All That You Give", it immediately became clear why Swinscoe had made the pilgrimage to St Louis to secure her participation on Cinematic Orchestra's recent album *Everyday*. Her firm, defiant presence was the jolt of electricity the concert needed, transforming it from an admirring, well crafted homage into something much more volatile and vital. As she sparred with Niara over the phrase *"you're giving me so much love"*, the music finally sparked into life. Now swollen into an eight piece, the orchestra also started to enjoy themselves. After a few songs, the vocalists left the stage for the instrumentalists to raise the pace with a faster, more percussive workout. Now that they were fired up, they pushed the music further out with some mildly squalling sax, cheeky keyboard licks and the odd analogue warble squeezed out by turntablist Carpenter. As the sound nudged towards the more coherent moments from Herbie Hancock's *Sextant*, it wasn't quite enough to really get the crowd moving, but more than a few heads responded with nods of appreciation. Rapturous applause brought Bass back on for an encore, buzzing with pleasure as she and The Cinematic Orchestra reprised "Theme De Yoyo", from *Les Stances À Sophie*, the landmark album she made with The Art Ensemble Of Chicago. After being restricted to black and white all night the visuals finally burst into technicolour, as Fontella and the group let rip. □

ELETRONIKA FESTIVAL
BELO HORIZONTE VARIOUS VENUES
BRAZIL

BY DENISE RESENDE

By mixing Brazilian songs into their sets, Kruder & Dorfmeister and Kid Loco were probably just trying to please the local audience, but most probably they were stamping their approval of Brazilian music as a fertile area for electronic music to explore. The Brazilian experimental acts at this festival, in a city about 400 kilometres above Rio De Janeiro, desperately wanted to prove that their nationality did not stop them from making music as good as their foreign peers. Allocated their own space out of sight from the big acts, the experimental faction played in the Teatro Francisco Nunes, a cosy little theatre generally used for classical concerts, seating no more than 100 people. Appropriately enough, they attracted a more serious public, mainly composed of musicians and music connoisseurs.

Turning a lighting problem to their advantage, opening act National set the mood with only a tiny lamp illuminating the dark stage and variously sized lines projected onto a screen backdrop. Their music was just as simple, sometimes too much so, when it appeared to be no more than a random scattering of sounds: a radio being tuned in followed by heavy bass rumble and a huge blast sounding something like the start of a thunderstorm or a rocket taking off. When the hall was plunged into darkness, except for the iMac screen lighting up the face of its female controller and the backdrop image of a poorly tuned TV set, the effect was something like *2001: A Space Odyssey* meets *Poltergeist*.

Objeto Amarelo featuring the duo Femur, struck a different, not to say more cheerful note. Featuring a lead singer who looked like one of The Strokes, they were a somewhat conventional guitar group whose predilection for 70s science fiction noises sounded like they were auditioning a *Pokémon* soundtrack.

Playing great 80s dance music alternately spiked with heavy guitars and child-like sounds, The Golden Shower Experience were relaxed and amusing. Their performance was directed by a man in a rabbit mask, who controlled the output with what appeared to be a joystick, appropriately enough, given the Atari video games projected behind him. The rest of the group are just as shy about showing themselves. Nobody has seen their faces, and they have no plans to release their music on CD. But all their songs can be downloaded from the Website www.goldenshower.gs. A visit is recommended for fans of *Miami Vice*, *Magnum* and superhero cartoons.

By way of contrast the most eagerly anticipated festival act was pexbaA, a group that had evolved from an 80s Heavy Metal group called Holocaust (yeah, scary). But thankfully nothing from their previous lifetime has been carried over into this incarnation's virtuoso jazz 'n' roll, led by a frontman who didn't so much sing as moan like a madman. His lyrics made no sense at all. He could have been speaking Russian, or perhaps he was just drunk. At least he was happy and hyper and kept the audience entertained. Heavy on harp, walloping drums and piano samples, pexbaA lived up to expectations, proving Brazilians are capable of making good contemporary music without sacrificing their personality. □

Above: Turntable Hellreisers, including (right) Martin Tétreault, Marina Rosenfeld and Otomo Yoshihide. Below: Cinematic Orchestra beef up their grooves with Fontella Bass (bottom right)

BANG ON A CAN WITH CECIL TAYLOR
LONDON BARBICAN
UK

BY BEN WATSON

The New York Times once described Bang On A Can as "a fiercely aggressive group combining the power and punch of a rock band with the precision and clarity of a chamber ensemble". It's curious how the qualities which made The Mothers Of Invention, Egg, National Health and Henry Cow anomalous and 'underground' in the 60s and 70s now constitute every arts promoter's dream. In her notes in the Barbican concert programme, Julia Wolfe describes how the music scene in 1986 New York was polarised between academic music uptown (world premieres, black ties, earnest audiences) and the downtown experimental scene (serious pretension, black T-shirts, earnest audiences). Bang On A Can started as a one off festival in a Soho art gallery: the message was that performing contemporary compositions could be fun. Now a sextet, Bang On A Can resemble Kronos Quartet: media-friendly faces for selling that unsaleable commodity, contemporary music.

Despite the emphasis on 'fun', Bang On A Can are not clowns, and they can play. Lisa Moore (piano) and Wendy Sutter (cello) know their instruments, know where the microphones are, and know what the amplified results will sound like. Guitarist Mark Stewart wears a tam-o'-shanter atop his dreadlocks, but he can read score paper too. Bassist Robert Black can read, but also play independent jazz rhythm; Evan Ziporyn's bass clarinet nods to Eric Dolphy; David Cossin moves between notated percussion (marimba) and drum kit with ease. In the first half – no Cecil Taylor in sight – Bang On A Can played an unannounced piece by Tan Dun (written before he scored *Crouching Tiger* and, as Ziporyn put it, "changed his phone number"), a tune by Hermeto Pascoal arranged by Ziporyn, and *Eugene*, Don Byron's soundtrack for a silent TV half hour mimed by comedian Ernie Kovacs in 1951.

The music in the first half was humoresque: technically adroit, but also finicky, coy and episodic. By attempting to collate the various delights of contemporary music – minimalism's bright airiness, downtown genre-switching, the sax and guitar solos of jazz and rock – they end up with compositions so lightweight, they're hardly there. Maybe there's a reason for the camps formed by uptown academics and downtown bohemians: 'contemporary composition' requires specific audiences capable of criticism and response. In a vacuum, it's meaningless.

Asymmetrical ostinatos borrowed from Stravinsky are a familiar device in art rock. To play them with conviction, an ensemble needs a group feel. Bang On A Can's rhythms had the glassy awkwardness of Braille dot readers asked to groove: guitar licks and piano runs sounded exposed and soulless, awkward and clashing. The Kovacs video projected behind the group raised a few laughs, but even these were isolated and selfconscious. Bang On A Can's playing lacked the technical avidity which allows John Zorn and Bill Frisell to get away with pastiche.

The second half featured Cecil Taylor's new work, baldly named *New Work* (really no name at all). Glimpsed over a musician's shoulder, the 'score' consisted of a few derisory doodles, scribbled words and scattered musical signs. Only three members of Bang On A Can reappear to play this indeterminate piece, indicating some kind of backstage rumpus. The surprise was the unannounced appearance of drummer Tony Oxley. Together, Taylor and Oxley produced a uniquely broken open, dramatic and precarious hysteria. The contrast with the first half was graphic. Bang On A Can had been playing the surface of music, sketching motifs from a position of contemplative cool. Taylor's music is utterly different: it demands the complete person, a statement of musical beliefs and preferences in the raw instant.

It's well known that Tony Oxley breaks with any sense of regular metre, but it's not often considered *why*. His beats send shockwaves through received paradigms of musical structure: the result is that every note becomes a gesture. The individual musician must take responsibility for. On this showing, the pair were so electrically sensitive to each possible sound that even at low volume, the atmosphere was unbearably tense. Taylor and Oxley forced the three Bang On A Can musicians who did show up to improvise what they *are* rather than what they *know*. It worked. Robert Black's bass sounded especially good. The collective improvisation tore spaces in the fabric of 'community', and created an unheralded musical piece with the materials to hand. Like programming John Cage in the midst of current academic compositions. Taylor and Oxley showed that all the careful notation of the first half was so much tepid twaddle.

There was a moment of high comedy as Mark Stewart, goaded into action by Taylor's seeming refusal to obey harmonic logic, resorted to adolescent memories of Van Halen's ascending guitar. Showing that his titanic profligacy is the opposite of boorishness, Taylor immediately took up Stewart's intervals, stretched them and posed them back as a question. However, this left Stewart with nothing to play. Oxley's vast musicality, in contrast, thrives on every Taylor zip and cluster.

Taylor was evidently booked on the basis of his reputation rather than his incendiary music. Last time, the Barbican paired him with the legendary bebop drummer Max Roach, this time with Bang On A Can: frame him, dilute him, make him acceptable, surround him with musical fluff and videos and programme notes about 'fun'. Actually, these strategies are not just tired and insulting, they are unnecessary. No one walked out in the second half: it was palpable that we were witnessing an exceptional event. An audience which had previously been distracted and fragmented (if positive) was suddenly unified. We became involved and alert. Breaking with the sterile notion of musical culture as observing the trajectories of a few career composers, Taylor and Oxley gave us back our sense of *now*.

ADVENTURES
NEW YORK SYMPHONY SPACE
USA

BY DAVID KRASNOW

New York's approach to competition is to ignore it, but there's no doubt that Chicago's music scene rose in the 1990s as New York's was on the wane. Around the end of 93, it seemed that Chicago's best groups (Souled American, Shrimp Boat) had broken up, the free jazz around the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians was fatigued, its rituals congealed into preconceived gestures. That year's big news was Liz Phair. The week I left town to move to NYC, a group named after a certain chelonian reptile recorded their debut. Some months later, after Tortoise's debut had broken, Chicago had become the hottest music town in America. New York, on the other hand, was not as I'd left it. The Knitting Factory moved from a ratty loft to swank Tribeca. Suddenly, downtown seemed like old hat next to the nifty cipher 'post-rock'.

Thus, there's a little pathos about Bill Bragin, who books Joe's Pub, bringing together a bunch of 90s Chicago wunderkinder (plus one elder statesman) with some of downtown's leading lights for three nights in May, in a series awkwardly billed as Adventures. At Symphony Space, far uptown and underpromoted, the thin crowd belied any sense of a historic meeting.

If there's a single barrier dividing line downtown and post-rock, it's electronica. Thus it was smart to lead off by pairing Tortoise's John McEntire with Ikue Mori, both percussionists turned Powerbookers. Mori and McEntire wove dissonant waves of sound that lapped up against the filmic unconscious: the bass thrumming of a horror soundtrack, the hissing and grinding of robot warfare, the analogue oscillations of sci-fi. With the players seated at tables of gear – Mori impassive, McEntire looking bored – it was mostly impossible to say who was creating what. Good thing their third partner, Zeena Parkins, has never shied away from theatrical flair. The trio setting put me in mind of Parkins's early *Something Out There*, but the inventiveness of her singular electric harp has grown exponentially. She evoked industrial metal, a cymbal, a shower of sand, trains, a siren, a pedal steel (Parkins might have been studying Fred Frith's epic solos on *Cleaning*). A growing body of impressive chamber composition has lent Parkins's improvisation more space, a wider dynamic range, and a savvy knack for bricolage. It was too bad that neither of the New Yorkers responded when McEntire introduced some tacky electro beats, they hung back while he soloed on a digital drum pad over canned tracks. Parkins, fresh from a stint with Bjork and Matmos, might have had something interesting to say to the question of what happens when 'pop' finds itself in music that isn't pop.

Isotope 217 paired with Cannibal Ox, representing NYC's HipHop underground, was the most inspired meeting of the series. You certainly couldn't fault Cannibal Ox for enthusiasm. The duo (and friends like OJ Cip) was tickled that a group had gone to the trouble of reproducing their mixes, and live accompaniment did indeed intensify psychedelic numbers like "Raspberry Fields", with its Brian Eno snippet. They called out "Isotope, ya'll" like a mantra, as if isotope was a verb. But Cannibal Ox didn't really isotope so well: used to doing things their way, the five beats seemed to leave them cowed. The group miscalculated, playing The Roots and staying heavy on the downbeat – more in the manner of their 1999 album *Utonian Automatic* than the later, Burroughsian *Who Stole The I Walkman* – and the funk inspired nothing much but "put your hands together". It may not have helped that Vordul Megilah took a powder, Camu Tao and Metro, The Smash Brothers, helped Vast Aire out on the mic. Joking about playing with a guitarist (Jeff Parker, elegant as always), Camu Tao sang, "*I'm a rockstar/I'm gonna rock the mic wherever we are*" – truly unworthy. And when *they're* not feeling it, how are we supposed to?

In the end, of course, scenes aren't just about cities, but generations, aesthetics. Saxophonist Fred Anderson and drummer Chad Taylor are both Chicagoans, jazz players, and African-American. Anderson is an old guard tenor player affiliated with the AACM and the proprietor of the Velvet Lounge, where Taylor has played with the cool electro jazz gang Chicago Underground. Yet Anderson's static barrages of 16th notes sent Taylor into hibernation. When the saxophonist finally let up for breath, Taylor did beautiful, African-informed polyrhythmic work, using hands and sticks to open a simple trap kit into a percussion orchestra. Sharing the bill was guitarist Marc Ribot, gamely playing the sideman, working his ass off to elaborate Anderson's anaemic material with harmonic runs and chords and his typically brilliant choice of timbres. It's remarkable that a man Anderson's age can sustain his blowing power, equally so that an improvisor of his experience should be so oblivious to others. As the musicians struggled with unfamiliar contexts over three nights, Anderson's refusal to do anything other than what he does served as a history lesson: a reminder of how 'freedom' becomes a straitjacket, of why the downtown scene broke away from loft jazz, and why post-rock exploded post-punk at its most self-satisfied and stagnant.

PHOTOS PHILIP SHERBURNE

TIKIMAN & SCION
SAN FRANCISCO RECOMBINANT LABS COMPOUND
USA

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Reggae has always been a music of displacements: an island dialect based upon American R&B (itself deeply rooted in African musical traditions) that developed into one of the late 20th century's most powerfully diasporic musics, transplanted in the unlikeliest of hosts, from punk rock to Hardcore rave culture. Nowhere was this displacement more evident than on a Saturday late in May, when Chain Reaction's Scion and Tikiman played at the Recombinant Labs Compound in San Francisco.

Scion, the duo of Pete Kuschnereit (aka Substance) and René Lowe (aka Vainqueur), represent one of reggae's most surprising mutations. It's a German twist to the tradition, where Berlin Techno producers like the Basic Channel and Chain Reaction collective (Maurizio, Various Artists, Porter Ricks et al) and Pole have for a decade infused the glistening sheen of electronic dance music with the grit and mysticism of classic dub. The Dominican-born Tikiman (Paul Tikiman St Hilaire) began collaborating with Basic Channel's Maurizio (Moritz von Oswald) and Mark Ernestus in 1996, lending his deep, gravelly patois to a series of gliding Techno 10"s, and in 1997 the trio inaugurated Rhythm And Sound, a more roots-oriented project. For the Compound event, Scion stuck closely to the template of pulsing, filtered dub Techno while Tikiman offered lilting choruses, guttural interjections and sweet invocations to Jah.

But it wasn't just the hybridity of the music that distinguished Saturday night's event, nor the sight of Scion peering intently into their laptops while Tikiman, a rainbow of handkerchiefs wrapped around his throat and wrists, growled and sang into the mic. The Recombinant Labs Compound is not strictly speaking a venue at all, but a recording studio run by Naut Humon, head of Asphodel Records and a member of the Ars Electronica organisation, so the event had the feel of a private recording session. To meet the demand for tickets, there was a session at 9pm and then again at midnight, and each sitting was so packed that people stood shoulder-to-shoulder in virtually every inch of the studio – including the triangular space behind the mixing desk, where they jostled elbows with Scion and dodged Tikiman's waving mic.

The whole thing felt like some strange post-Techno outpost: to get to the Compound you had to drive through one of San Francisco's most economically depressed areas, finally parking at the end of a long dirt road where empty warehouses and grey weeds testified to the neighbourhood's industrial legacy. A fresh breeze off the bay belied the notorious toxicity underfoot, and woodsmoke from a nearby carpenter's studio lent an oddly pastoral aura to the affair. The evening began with a DJ set from Sutekh, while Naut Humon cut in and out with a selection of what he calls "Modules" – archived recordings from artists who have visited the space rendered in dazzling multi-channel sound on the Surround Traffic Control system. Sets from Terre Thaemlitz and DJ Olive received a rare public airing as the Compound's engineer sent their frequencies careering around the room with a joystick controller, and Orthlorng Musork's Sue Costabile and Swipe's Scott Pagano morphed digital video loops on the screens ringing the room.

By 10:30pm, when Scion and Tikiman set up behind the mixing desk, the temperature inside had risen at least ten degrees. Next to the Modules, their set was comparatively simple: an hour or so of half-speed beats cushioned with swirls of delay and buoyant keyboard stabs. Tikiman stood between the laptoppers, unfazed at finding himself less than an arm's length from his closest listeners. Occasionally he would bend down to watch the rhythm tracks graphically blossoming across the computer screens. When the first show had finally ended – a long, gentle arc that trailed off without anything as obvious as a climax – there was already a line of people 100-strong waiting to get into the second session. Salt breeze, woodsmoke and the whiff of ganja still commingled in the air – an uncanny scent that offered the perfect complement to the welcome rootlessness of the evening.

Weird scenes inside the Compound: Naut Humon (top right) rubs shoulders with Tikiman and Scion

Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.
Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk
Compiled by Phil England

Cinematic Orchestra (left) at Out There, Prefuse 73 at Alive

UK festivals

DIASPORA
LONDON
A celebration of music from around the world in a series of free events in London's parks as well as more intimate concert appearances and opportunities to hear musicians talk about their work. Some of the principal visiting artists include Trinidad's world champion steel band The Skiffle Bunch, Afro-Swahili music from Zanzibar's Malindi Taraab Orchestra, muslim trance chant and drumming from Indonesia's Cilay, gumboot song and dance from southern Africa's The Warriors, sacred sufi and secular songs from Egypt's El Tanbura, and Indo-Arabian traditional music from Yemen's Say'Un Popular Arts. Free events: London Kew Gardens (29-30 June), Regent's Park (6-7 July) and Greenwich Park (13-14 July), midday-9pm. Concerts and discussions: London various venues, 26 June-14 July, 020 7456 0404, www.culturalco-operation.org

KITCHEN MOTORS
LONDON
Two day mini-festival featuring the combined talents of the Icelandic music and arts collective. The first night features *Helvitis Organ Symphony*, a massed electric keyboard piece co-directed by Wire's Bruce Gilbert, Kira Kira's abstract electronica in a performance with Sigríður Björg Sigurðardóttir's violent puppetry, Slowblow's ballads, Auxpan's homemade electronics (from amplified concrete mixer to disembowelled cassette recorder) and Dagur Kari's short film *Lost Weekend* (6 July). The following night (7) features blissed out electronic songs from Múm, the multiple vintage organ experience of The Apparat Organ Quartet, layered micro-textures from guitarist Hilmar Jensson and bassist Skúli Sverrison, and Thorgeir Gudmundsson's short film *Memphis*. London ICA, 7.30pm, £7/£6, 020 7930 3647, www.ica.org.uk

OUT THERE
BRACKNELL
A new music and arts festival to add to the summer calendar at Bracknell's South Hill Park. Promising something for everyone, the line-up includes The Cinematic Orchestra, Lamb, JI4, The Shrine and Osibisa (5 July); David Byrne, The Handsome Family, Gilad Atzmon & The Orient House Orchestra, Willard Grant Conspiracy, Scratch Perverts' Prime Cuts, Fingathing and Homelife (6); Stereo MCs, The Herbaliser, Vocal Sampling, Mukka and Skip McDonald (7). There's also performance (*Faust* on stilts), puppetry (a 65 foot inflatable leech), a slew of activities for kids plus theatre, dance, film, visual arts, and a firework finale. Bracknell South Hill Park, 01344 484123, www.outtherefestival.co.uk

RHYTHMSTICKS
LONDON
Annual concert series which now claims to be the world's largest percussion festival. The highlight is a concert that is part of *The Wire*'s 20th Anniversary celebrations: a double bill of John Cale supported by Osaka's Boredoms (13 July, see also page 90). Other highlights include the hypnotic trance music of the Touareg nomads of Algeria (13), South Indian classical music from Sapthaakshara (16), Fela Kuti's former drummer Tony Allen's 13 piece Afrobeat ensemble (18). Bill Bruford's Earthworks on the same bill as Stewart Copeland with Ensemble Bash, (18), Trilok Gurtu's cross-cultural mix (19) and the only UK date for African superstar Mory Kante's 11 piece group supported by Kunle Ayanlowo (20). London Royal Festival Hall, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk/rhythmsticks

TRUCK FESTIVAL
OXFORDSHIRE
The fifth, and biggest, incarnation of this rural festival. The line up includes The Handsome Family, The Rock Of Travolta, Goldrush, Fonda 500, poet Tom Paulin and some 50 others. Proceeds go to Amnesty International and local charities. Oxfordshire Hill Farm, 20-21 July, £20/£15, www.truckrecords.com

WOMAD
READING
World Music's hardy perennial this year features Anoushka Shankar, Orchestra Baobab, Misty In Roots, Adrian Sherwood, Ernest Ranglin, Kanda Bongo Man, Cara Dillon, Rachid Taha, Bob Brozman/Rene Lacaille/Takashi Hirayasu, The Bisserov Sisters, Geoffrey Oryema, Ozomatli and Alpha Blondy among a host of others. Reading Rivermead, 26-28 July, £85 weekend ticket, £25 Friday, £45 Saturday, £40 Sunday, 0118 939 0930, www.womad.org/reading

International festivals

ALIVE
BELGIUM
International festival of electronic music featuring live performances from Speedy J, Jake Mandell, Plaid, Rechenzentrum, Prefuse 73 along with DJ sets from BD8 State, Jazzanova, A Guy Called Gerald, Andrea Parker and more. Eifel Gut Eid Festival Ground, 26-28 July, www.alive.be

FESTIVAL D'ALTITUDE
FRANCE
High altitude avant jazz event in the Haute-Pyrenees featuring AMM, Crispell/Guy/Lytton, Leandre/Manen/Marguet/Ryan and more. Luz-St-Sauveur various venues, 11-14 July, www.luz.org

FESTIVAL MIMI
FRANCE
17th edition of this rural New Music event, this year featuring Czech legends Plastic People Of The Universe, Max Nagl, Chris Cutler/Joseph Racaille/John Greaves, Max Eastley & Spaceheads, Cyro Baptista, Russian trumpet and accordion duo Guyvoronsky/Petrova, Uz Jsme Doma and Cheval De Frise. Marseille L'Hôpital

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Purcell Room

The Boredoms (Photo: Dianne Jones/The Wire)

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sbc

2002 marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of the first issue of *The Wire*. From now till the end of the year, the magazine will be launching a number of special events and projects to celebrate the fact. Details will be announced in forthcoming issues of the magazine

WIRE 20
20 YEARS 1982-2002 WWW.THEWIRE.CO.UK

Boredoms (left) and John Cale celebrate 20 years of *The Wire* at London's Royal Festival Hall

JOHN CALE + BOREDOMS
UK
2002 marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of *The Wire*'s first issue From now until the end of the year we will be hosting a series of special events and projects in order to celebrate the fact, beginning with this unique double bill, presented in conjunction with the South Bank Centre's Rhythmsticks festival (see page 88). Led by Yamatsuka Eye, Osaka's Boredoms have metamorphosed from an unsurpassable avant rock unit into an urban ritual beating sytem of unrelieved power and intensity. This will be the group's first London performance in its new incarnation. Meanwhile, all-round alt.rock/avant garde legend John Cale makes a rare London appearance, performing a new set specially prepared for this event. London Royal Festival Hall, 13 July, 8pm, £17 50-£12, 020 7960 4242, www rfh org.uk/ rhythmsticks

Carline Aux Iles Du Fnoul, 25-28 July, www lafnche org/mimi

HARMONIC BALTIMORE
USA
Baltimore's first festival of radical African-American music, featuring Hamid Drake/Lafayette Gilchrist/Janbu Shahid, Brother Ah World Music Ensemble, solo percusion from Toshi Makihara, Paul Murphy/Joel Flutterman/Vattel Cherry, L3 and Kahana Baltimore Morgan State University, 12-13 July, 8pm, www harmonicbaltimore org

KONFRONTATIONEN
AUSTRIA
This excellent annual festival of contemporary improvised music on the Austro-Hungarian border is now in its 23rd year The line-up features all-star electronics group Mimeo, Jérôme Noetinger Quintet, Bob Ostertag & Pierre Herbert, Jaap Blonk's Braaxtaal, Jon Rose & Veryan Weston, Four Walls, Tsaher/Kowald/Lovens, Peter Brötzmann Band, John Russell & Roger Turner, Thomas Kaufmann Ensemble and a deconstruction of Steve Reich's *Four Organs* Nickelsdorf Jazzgalerie, 19-21 July, 00 43 2146 2359, www konfrontationen at

NORBERGFESTIVAL
SWEDEN
International festival running the gamut of new electronic music from Ambient to noise near an iron mine in rural Sweden The line-up includes Monolake, Janek Schaefer, Johannes Bergmark and many others, plus cinema events, workshops and more. Norberg Mimer Iron Mine, 25-27 July, £40, www norbergfestival com

ODDSTRUMENTS
USA
A gallery exhibition of fantastic original instrument designs and unusual sound sources, with instruments on display, sound samples and documentation on their designers 1-30 July, Baltimore various venues, free, www johnberndt org/oddstruments

SAFE AS MILK FESTIVAL
NORWAY
Fourth experimental electronica and avant rock focused festival organised by the SOM label. This year's bill includes Fennesz, Hazard, Jazzkammer, Alexander Rishaug, JR Ewing and more Haugesund Høvleriet, 25-27 July, www safe-as-milk org/festival

SOUND/SHIFT
USA
"As far as we can tell the LARGEST gathering of experimental free improvisors EVER in North America," exclaim the organisers of an event in which more than 75 US improvisors will gather for three 12 hour concerts The concerts will be structured as continuous performances with players overlapping Performers include Alberto Gaitan, John Olerker, Ernesto Infante-Diaz, Eric Leonardsen, Bradford Reed, Vattel Cherry, Lafayette Gilchrist, Dan Decellis, Scott Fields, John Berndt, Catherine Pancake, Helena Espvall and many others Baltimore various venues, 26-28 July, free, www.johnberndtgroup net/soundshift

WHAT IS MUSIC?
AUSTRALIA
Australia's premier, two-city annual experimental music festival returns this year with David Grubbs, Otomo Yoshihide, Fuckhead, Voice Crack, Sachiko M, Goodiepal, Günter Muller, The Flirts, Toshimaru Nakamura, Reuber, Tetuzi Akiyama, Klangwart, o blaat, Pimmon, Chris Abrahams, Oren Ambarchi, Scott Horscroft, Sue Harding, Joyce Hinterding, Martin Ng, Tony Buck, Jim Denley and more. Melbourne various venues, 12-18 July, and Sydney various venues, 19-24 July, www whatismusic com

ZIFF
TANZANIA
Subtitled the Fifth Festival of the Dhow Countries, this is East Africa's largest cultural event The 16 day celebration features music, film and performing arts from Africa, the Gulf States, Iran, the Indian subcontinent, the islands of the Indian Ocean and their global diaspora. Zanzibar various venues, full details at www zif or tz

Special events

BLACK NERD: THE ELECTRONIC AVANT GARDE
UK
A discussion on new trends in HipHop's avant garde and its move towards electronica, taking in the likes of Cannibal Ox, Antipop Consortium, Four Tet and Roots Manuva The event will be chaired by Attica Blues' Charlie Dark and intends to look at the current state of experimental black musical identities Speakers include Will Ashon from Big Oada, Eat Your Own Ears promoter Tom Baker and other special guests to be confirmed The talk is followed by "audiosubversions and sound manipulation" courtesy of Charlie Dark, and is complemented by an exhibition of artwork from the celebrated Scrawl Collective London Cherry Jam at Royal Oak, 4 July, 020 7727 9950, www cherryjam net

KNITTING FACTORY 15TH ANNIVERSARY
UK
New York's downtown music club and record label celebrates its birthday with two concerts in London Fiery saxophonist Charles Gayle shares a bill with De Amsterdam Klezmer Band (3 July) and the genre trashing unit Gutbucket appear alongside avant jazz vibesman Bill Ware (4) London Spitz, £10 per concert, 8pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz co.uk

OCCULTURE
UK
Festival of esoteric culture with Psychic TV's Genesis P-Orridge, Colin Wilson and Aleister Crowley's son Amado. Tibetan culture is represented by singer in exile Soname Yangchen, representatives from the office of Tibet and the Amnesty International officer for Tibet, and there are speakers on Tarot, remote viewing and mind control The festival ribbon is cut by the Mayor of Brighton Brighton & Hove, various venues, times & prices, 1-13 July, 01273 384801/709709, www occulture tv

PEOPLE SYMPHONY
UK
Ambitious project featuring hundreds of young musicians from across London alongside a 19 piece big band featuring new jazz fixtures and Indian classical musicians such as Steve Buckley, Byron Wallen, Chris Batchelor, Steve Watts, Nana Tsiboe, Thebe Lipere, Bosco De Oliveira, Baluji Shrivastav, Sirishkumar, Mike Pickering and Daniel de Azevedo. The whole piece is directed by flautist Eddie Parker. London Ocean, 13 July, 7pm, free, 020 8533 0111

RESONANCE FM
LONDON TO THE WORLD
The music and art broadcast and Webcast project of the London Musicians' Collective continues to gather pace There are regular music shows by Billy Jenkins, the Kosmische Club and *The Wire*'s Edwin Pouncey, plus shows concentrating on environmental sound, sound poetry, the writing/performance interface, archive recordings of improvised music, new music from Japan and live improvised music by women Every Sunday there is an eight hour in-depth look at a particular artist's career – recent shows

PHOTO (BOREDOMS) DIANNE JONES

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have featured Otomo Yoshihide, Shirley Collins, Phil Ochs and Captain Beefheart. The Go! show caters for children of all ages; saxophonist Caroline Kraabel broadcasts her Saturday morning walks with her instrument and her son, and the LMC Sound Studio hosts a potlatch radio art show. *Clear Spot* on weeknights is hosted by one-off guests which have included David Toop, Wire's Colin Newman, Veryan Weston, Steve Beresford and Joe Banks aka Disinformation. Broadcasts, on 104.4 FM, go out across Central London 5pm-1am weekdays and noon-1am at weekends. Web streaming is via www.resonancefm.com

SOUNDING OUT
UK
An international symposium on sound and media convergence bringing together scholars and practitioners including Larry Blake, Scanner, David Sonnenschein, Gordon House and Lucy Gough in a series of presentations, discussions and performances. Stoke-On-Trent Staffordshire University, 11-13 July, mcs.staffs.ac.uk/sound/conference.htm

VIVA THE STINKING REPUBLIC 3: NEW YORK
UK
An evening of short movies by New York based artists including Thurston Moore & Dave Markey, Angelblood's Boug & Worth, Nod's Tim Poland, Leah Singer, Lee Ranaldo and Chris Habib. Brighton Cinematheque, 11 July, 8pm, £3.50/£3, 0127 384300, www.cinematheque.org

WANDELWEISER IN RESIDENCE
AUSTRIA
A group of musicians and artists from different disciplines live and work together for a week presenting a new piece of work each evening. The artists in question are micromusic trombonist Radu Malfatti plus Antoine Beuger, Jurg Frey, Manfred Werder, Christoph Nicolaus, Gottfried Wanner and Sylvia Alexandra Schimag. Zurndorf Friedrichshof, 1-7 July, friedenke.kulcsar@blackbox.net

YMP
UK
A series of music business seminars continues with sessions on contracts and A&R (3 July) and music publishing (9). London Ocean, 6-8pm, free subject to availability, 020 7831 4040, www.showhow.org.uk

On stage

MICK BECK/SIMON FELL/PAUL HESSION
Top class improvising trio. Leeds Moderno Cafe Bar (4 July), Sheffield The Grapes (5)

BREEDOMS
Yamatsuka Eye's percussion troupe drum up a storm. Brighton Concorde 2 (10 July), London Royal Festival Hall (13) (see page 90)

BURNING SPEAR
Roots reggae veteran. Brighton Concorde 2 (18), London Astoria (21 July), Birmingham Academy (22)

GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ALL STARS
The Mothership lands again. London Ocean, 15 July, £15, 020 8533 0111, www.ocean.org.uk

CLOUDEAD
Avant HipHop trio from San Francisco's Anticon collective tour. Brighton Gloucester (18), Bristol Cube (19), Bristol Ashton Court Festival (19), Edinburgh Liquid Room (22), Leeds Brudenell Social (23), Birmingham Medicine Bar (24), London 93 Feet East (25)

CORNELIUS
Japanese pop wonderboy on tour. Liverpool Kings Dock Big Top Arena (12 July, with Air), Ireland Whitness Rising Stage (13), Scotland T In The Park (14), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (15)

LUC FERRARI
The French electroacoustician discusses his work before Apartment House perform his *Chansons Pour Le Corps*, a suite of ten pieces for voice, recorded voice and live instruments with words taken from interviews with women on the subject of the female form. Apartment House will also perform Ferrari's *Bonjour, Comment Ca Va?* and Sylvano Bussotti's graphic work *Sette Fogli*. London Almeida at King's Cross, 6 July, 7:30pm, 020 7359 4404, www.almeida.co.uk

MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
The former Disposable Hero Of HipHopnsy. London Jazz Cafe, 10-11 July, 020 7344 0044/7916 6060

LOU DARE & EDDIE PREVOST
AMM founding members reunited for a one off concert with support from The Eddie Prévost Trio, featuring Tom Chant on soprano saxophone and John Edwards on double bass. London Vortex, 9 July, 8pm, 020 7254 6516

GILBERTO GIL
Brazilian Tropicalismo legend in a tribute to Bob Marley. London Barbican, 5 July, 7:30pm, £20-£10, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org.uk

HERBIE HANCOCK
Pioneering pianist in a quintet with Michael Brecker, Roy Hargrove, George Mraz and Willie Jones. London Barbican, 9 July, £30-£15, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org.uk

HOMELIFE
Hot on the heels of labelmates Cinematic Orchestra, Paddy Steer's large collective hits the road to promote their debut Ninja Tune release, *Flying Wonders*. Croydon Festival (13 July), Bristol Ashton Court Festival (20), Reading Womad Festival (26), Birmingham Midlands Arts Centre (27). www.ninjatune.com

DR JOHN
The grits-grits man tours his gilded splinters. York Barbican (27), Birmingham venue tbc (28), London Hammersmith Apollo (29)

DJ LOGIC & PROJECT LOGIC
Post-Black Rock event featuring guitarist Vernon Reid. London Jazz Cafe, 9 July, 020 7344 0044/7916 6060

LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA
Monthly meeting of this massed ensemble performing conducted improvisations and new open-ended compositions. London Red Rose Club, 7 July, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

CACHAITO LOPEZ
Cuban bass player's popular and award winning instrumental project. Basingstoke The Anvil (4 July), Glasgow Jazz Festival (5), Cardiff Coal Exchange (6), Brighton The Dome (7)

MURCOF
Evocative electronica from the Nortec auteur. London Lock Tavern (3 July, with DJs Tony Morley and Eat Your Own Ears), London Cargo (4, with Manitoba live plus DJs Tony Morley and Nick Luscombe)

PAN AFRICAN ORCHESTRA + STREE SHAKTI
Ghana's drum ensemble team up with the all female Indian percussion group to perform newly commissioned work as well as new arrangements of both groups' existing repertoire. London Barbican, 2 July, £20, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org.uk

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WESTWOOD RAP SHOW
Friday 11pm-2am/Saturday 9pm-midnight
HipHop flavas

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE
Saturday midnight-2am. Bass culture

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

LATE JUNCTION
Monday-Thursday 10:15-midnight
New Music compendium

JAZZ LEGENDS
Friday 4-5pm. Archive recordings

ANDY KERSHAW
Friday 10:15-11:30pm. World Music

JAZZ ON 3
Friday 11:30pm-1am
Modern jazz in session and concert

WORLD ROUTES
Saturday 1-2pm
Lucy Duran presents a travelogue of global music

JAZZ FILE
Saturday 6-6:30pm
Documentary magazine

HEAR AND NOW
Saturday 10:45pm-1am. New Music magazine

MIXING IT
Sunday 11pm-midnight
Hyper eclectic mix of avant sounds

Regional

BBC LANCASHIRE
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ON THE WIRE
Saturday 10pm-midnight. *The Wire*'s dub columnist Steve Barker mixes it up wildstyle

BBC MERSEYSIDE
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PMS
Sunday midnight-2am. Eclectic mix of avant sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP
Wednesday 7.05-9pm, Sunday 10:05pm-midnight
Jazz and nu-beats

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM
(MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Friday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic avant mix

KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE
Sunday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

FROST AND HYPE
Sunday 3-5am. Jungle

4 HERO
Monday 2-4am. Jazz Jungle, cyber-soul, breakbeats

MATT JAM LAMONT
Wednesday 2-4am. More breakbeat science

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

SOLID STEEL
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Mad mixing from the Ninja Tune mob

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RANKIN' MISS P: RIDDIMS & BLUES
Saturday 10pm-midnight. Strictly roots

RESONANCE 104.4 FM (LONDON)
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Radical on-air alternative, details and streaming online at www.resonancefm.com

XFM 104.9 (LONDON)

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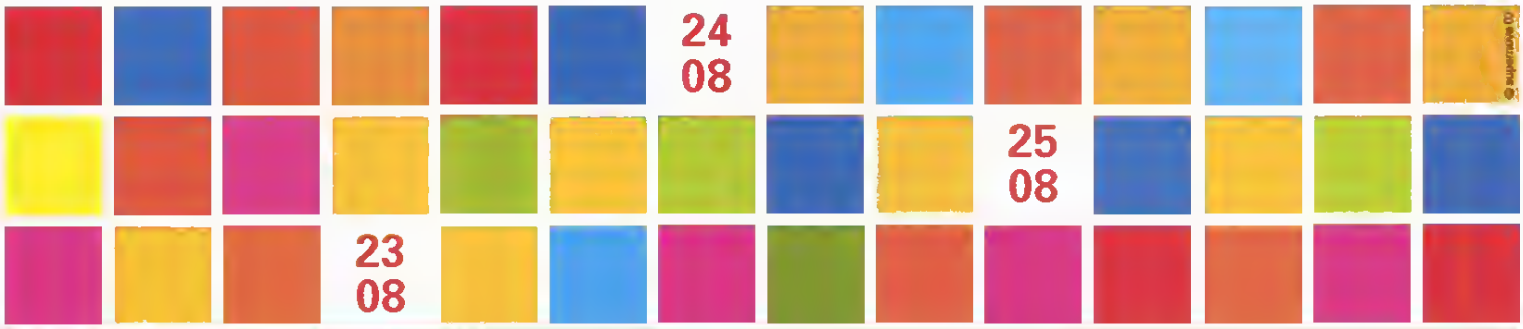
Sunday 9pm-midnight. Leftfield electronica

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on *The Wire* Website: www.thewire.co.uk



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program is to be confirmed and subject to change

ear

spynaworkshop — 6th July 8 - 2 pm

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For further information and on application form, contact the LCP Information Centre on 020 7514 6569.

www.lcp.linst.ac.uk

Wire at London's ICA (left), Mick Beck at Oringue Utingue

IGGY POP
The Stooge King plays two UK dates, Brixton Academy (13 July), Glasgow Barrowlands (17)

THE RAPTURE
Sonic Mook Experiment present New York's The Rapture live as part of their Future Rock 'N' Roll revue plus DJs Andrew Weatherall, Trevor Jackson, Sean McLusky, Disastronaut and others London 93 Feet East, 5 July, 8pm–2 30am, £5 before 9 30pm, £10 after, 020 7247 3293, www 93feeteast co uk

MCCOY TYNER + CHARLES LLOYD QUARTET
Coltrane's piano powerhouse in a quartet with bassist Charnett Moffett and percussionist Eric Harland, supported by saxophonist Lloyd London Barbican, 6 July, £23.50-£11, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org uk

WIRE
One off date for the original post-punk quartet to launch their new CD, *Read & Burn*. London ICA, 20 July, £10/£9, 020 7930 3647, www pinkflag com

Club spaces

BAD TIMING
A night of post-rock and electronics with live music from Fat Cat signings Charlottefield and lush electronica from Lien plus resident DJs Cambridge The Portland, 10 July, 8 30pm, £3, 01223 56472B www possible-area org/bad_timing html

BAGGAGE RECLAIM
Monthly mix of experimental acts British guitarist and melodeon player Jackie Grant improvises with Akira Toyonaga, Evrah performs English traditional folk music, *Sound Projector* editor Ed Pinsent and comic artist Harley Richardson perform vox organ improvisations as Mystery Dick, madcap electronica and circuit-bending from James Dunn, plus a set of songs from club host Richard Sanderson London 12 Bar Club, 8pm £6, 020 7916 6989, www bagrec com

CONSUME
Monthly experimental sounds at Glasgow s new 13th Note at West 13th Street featuring DJs Neck Doppler and The Stare, plus live acts to be confirmed Glasgow West 13th, 29 July, 8-11pm, free, 0141 586 9890, www consume freeserve co uk

EAR
Esoteric sounds in South East London courtesy of Spynaworkshop, Snorkel and Charles Stuart, plus DJs, VJs and a chill out room London The Albany, 6 July, 8pm-2am, £6/£4 50, 020 8692 8778, www deptford org uk

EXTRA
Collage, audioscapes and digitalia from Ladytron's Datamath, Imax and Albert, plus short film from Indigo, Flash movies from Jay Ropinsky, digital slideshows and live CCTV interventions London The Foundry, 14 July, 3am, free, 020 7739 6900, www.slowsound net

FABRIC
Killa Kela live, plus DJs Scratch Perverts, James Lavelle, Fabio and Krush (5 July), DJs Roni Size, Krust and UNKLE (12), DJs Groovender and Ed Rush (19) and Howie B and others (26) London Fabric, 9·30pm-5am, £12/£10, 020 7336 8898, www.fabriclondon.com

FREE RADICALS
Monthly improvisation meeting Vocal solo from Angeline Conaghan, plus the thos of Terje Evensen/Audun Waage/Darren Pickering and Tim Goldie/Martin/Simon Fell London Red Rose, 3 July, 8 15pm, £5, 020 7923 4929

HELTER STUPID
Difficult listening evening featuring multi-deck improvisation, electronics, live flute and saxophone DJ Lascelles Lascelle and special guest Kieran Hebden of Four Tet and Fridge London Smersh, 7 July, 7-11pm, 020 8769 8398

INTERLACE
Free improvisations by Eddie Prévost, Rodger Redgate, Jamie Coleman, Alex James and others with Michael Parsons performing his *September Pieces 2001* London Goldsmiths College Great Hall, 5 July, 7pm, £5/£3/donation, 07932 566 378, incalcando com/interlace

KOSMISCHE
The club's sixth birthday celebration featuring Primal Scream producer Jagz Kooner doing an undetermined 'something', plus DJ Will Barrow and club regulars London Upstairs at the Garage, 27 July, 9pm-3am, £6/£5, 020 7607 1818

ORINGUE UTINGUE
This month s name for the Bohman brothers' Improv weekly, now back at its regular haunt. Sakada, Inventory & Mark Browne (1 July), Mick Beck, Adam Bohman & Voltage (B), Nottingham's GORSE (15), Terry Stone and Paul Rogers (22) and The Bohman Family Show (29) London The Bonnington Centre, £4/£3, 01932 571323

THE REMIX NIGHT
Earl Zinger live, guest DJ Tiga and Xfm residents James Hyman and Eddy Temple-Morris London Cargo, 18 July, 7pm–1am, £5 before 9pm, £7 after, 020 7739 3440

SONOROUS
Kieran Hebden (that man again) guests with resident DJ Found Sounds and MCs EQ and Marshmello London Bug Bar, 20 July, 8pm-3am, free before 9pm, £4 before 11pm and £6 after, 020 773B 3184

THE SPIRIT OF GRAVITY
A night of experimental and electronic music showcasing talent from the South East. Waxed Apple, Remote and AZ9 perform live Brighton The Free Butt, 16 July, 8pm, £2, 01273 603974, www maphead org uk

THE SPRAWL
The innovative electronica club moves to a new venue for two nights in June and July June features irreverent digital abstractions from the Mego label's Evol, microbeats from Mexico's Murcof, David Tudor associate Matt Rogalsky performing on homemade electronics plus guest DJ Freq's Richard Fontenoy (27 June) July features eclectic new electronica from the Kid 606-tipped Timeblind, Mille Plateaux's Tim Hecker and Curd Duca plus regular Sprawl DJs (11 July). London The Lifthouse, £4/£3, 7 30pm-midnight, 020 7251 8787, www dfuse com/sprawl/

XEN: SOLID STEEL
Ninja Tune's monthly mix session featuring DJs Strictly Kev, DK and Ceresoul London Bridge & Tunnel, 21 July, 020 7739 8755, www ninjatune net

Incoming

BIG CHILL EASTNOR CASTLE
UK
The festival for the terminally chilled turns up in a new rural idyll overlooked by an ancient castle Live performances include Cinematic Orchestra, Terry Callier, Fila Brazilia and Roger Eno, DJs include Mr Scruff, Jedi Knights and Jerry Dammers Plus debates programmed in conjunction with Index On Censorship, films, videos and a pub quiz Herefordshire Eastnor Castle, 16-18 August, £89, 020 7688 8080, info@bigchill.net

ESSENTIAL FESTIVAL
UK
Major club culture event featuring DJ Shadow, Blackalicious, Lamb, The Orb, Dreadzone, Scratch Perverts, Mobb Deep, Jazzy Jeff, Doug E Fresh, Goldie, Groovender, Fabio, Ed Rush, Aphex Twin, Luke Vibert, Muziq, Kid Koala, Howie B, Femi Anikulapo-Kuti & The Positive Force, Asian Dub Foundation, ESG, People Under The Stairs, New Flesh, Trevor Watts & The Celebration Band, Prince Buster, Toots And The Maytals, Pioneers, Ethiopians, Dennis Alcapone, The Herbaliser, Cinematic Orchestra, Finga Thing, Arthur Baker, Zion Train, Badmarsh & Shri, Adnan Sherwood, Luke Vibert and more London Hackney Marshes, 3-4 August, £65 weekend ticket, £37 50 per day, 09068 230190, www.essentialfestival com

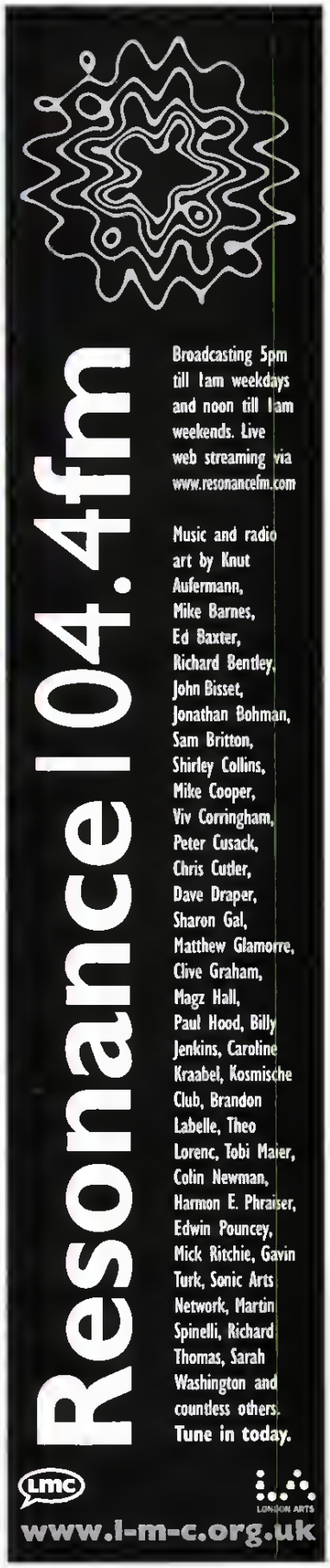
JAZZ EM AGOSTO
PORTUGAL
Featuring Keith Tippett Tapestry Orchestra, Barry Guy/Evan Parker/Paul Lytton, Chicago Underground Quartet, Jeb Bishop, The Fred Anderson Trio, Barry Guy/Mats Gustafsson/Marilyn Crispell/Raymond Strid, Barry Guy New Orchestra, Paul Dunmall Octet, Fred Anderson & Hamid Drake and more Lisbon, 2-10 August, 00 35 21 782 3483, www jazzportugal net, www gulbenkian pt

JAZZSAALFELDEN
AUSTRIA
Featuring Billy Bang's Vietnam The Aftermath, Jack De Johnette & Foday Musa Suso, Tim Berne, Moore/Horner/Vatcher, Gary Lucas's The Captain Beefheart Project, Mephista (Mori/Courvoisier/Ibarra) and many more. Saalfelden, 23-25 August, 00 43 6582 74963, www jazzsaalfelden at

THRILL JOCKEY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY
UK
All day event featuring Tortoise, The Sea & Cake, Trans Am, Howe Gelb, Fred Anderson Trio and 11th Dream Day London Ocean, 15 September, noon-midnight, £20, 020 7314 2B00/020 8533 0111, www ocean org uk

Out There items for inclusion in the August issue should reach us by Friday 5 July

PHOTOS OLLY HEWITT (WIRE) AMY & TANVEER (BECK)



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Run by
Chris Scofield

Roster includes
Ampbuzz, Steffen Basho-Junghans, Cul De Sac, Landing, The Lowdown, Planetarium Music, Surface Of Eceon

Brief History
Strange Attractors Audio House was born in Olympia, Washington in October 2000 with the release of The Lowdown's *Revolver II*. The label splintered from its longrunning radio programme *Strange Attractors* on KAOS Olympia Community Radio, inspired by the burning need to document sincere and honestly challenging music in physical form rather than solely over the airwaves. Releasing Steffen Basho-Junghans's *Inside* just a few months later proved to be a deeply moving experience. There was no looking back. Strange Attractors relocated to Portland, Oregon in March 2002.

Statement of Intent
Patterns of order can be found in otherwise turbulent systems – the Strange Attractor proves this. Music may be the ultimate manifestation of this theory. A common thread can be found through all stripes of music by virtue of the soul, therefore, anybody and anything which by its nature honestly experiments with sound and form no matter what avenue they amble down is welcome in our corner.

Future Plans
Future releases include Ampbuzz (solo guitar manipulation by Kinski's Chris Martin); Cul De Sac's soundtrack to Roger Corman's *The Strangler's Wife*, and new studio album *Death Of The Sun*, plus reissues of the Cul De Sac debut *ECIM*; two releases by Steffen Basho-Junghans, *Rivers And Bridges* and *7 Books*, EP by Landing entitled *Fade In/Fade Out*; new Surface Of Eceon album; Six Organs Of Admittance CD. Live: Landing and Surface Of Eceon play Terrastock 5, 11-13 October in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Landing tour the US during summer 2002.

Choice Cuts
Planetarium Music: *Traditional Psychedelic Music*, Steffen Basho-Junghans *Inside*

Info and manifesto. Chris Scofield

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THE WIRE TAPPER 1
APRIL 1999 ISSUE 170

VEGA/VAINIO/VAISANEN MEDAL **MASS** "DEPTH **MIXMASTER MIKE** CAN OF ASS KICKS **SI (CUT) DB VS SCANNER** BOVINE REVOLVER **SCALA** REMEMBER HOW TO BREATHE" **CORNELIUS** MIC CHECK **ROEDELIUS** DEEP BLUE **NASSIM MAALOUF** TARAB (NAST) **SOLEX** ONE LOUDER SOLEX **KREIDLER** "SHE WOKE UP AND THE WORLD HAD CHANGED" **DJ FOOD VS DAVID BYRNE** FUZZY FREAKY (VIA JOE) **ARTO LINDSAY** "BLUE EYE SHADOW" **SCHNEIDER TM** (EWEISS) **PORTER RICKS** REDUNDANCE (VERSION) **MIDNIGHT FUNK ASSOCIATION** WHEN WILL IT END **MIMI** "PIECE OF CAKE **2ND GEN** MALADY MADE SIMPLE (PRE INTERVENTIONIST VERSION)

THE WIRE TAPPER 2
NOVEMBER 1999 ISSUE 177

SLICKER "PRADEIP" **RHYS CHATHAM** HARD EDGE (ROUGH MIX) **ARGELA JAEGER & DAVID CUNNINGHAM** WOOD AND GLASS **DAF** "ALLES IST GUT" **TOM ZE** DEFECT 2 CURIOSIDADE" **MERIDIEM (PERCY HOWARD/FRED FRITH/BILL LASWELL/CHARLES HAYWARD)** INTERFERENCE **JANE DOWE & JERRE JHAEMLITZ** 03 07 05 98 **TARWATER** V AT **POWERFIELD** "BLOCK **RAM PRECKOP** SHUVAROOMS **PUPPY** HOT JUICE **JAE FAIR & YO LA TENGO** MINNESOTA MAN CLAIMS MONKEY BOWLED PERFECT GAME **THE PASTELS** LEAVING THIS ISLAND (JIM O'ROURKE REMIX) **BADAWI** FINAL WARNING **LABRADFORD** "V (HAROLD BUDD REMIX)"

THE WIRE TAPPER 3
APRIL 1999 ISSUE 182

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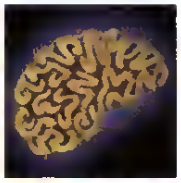
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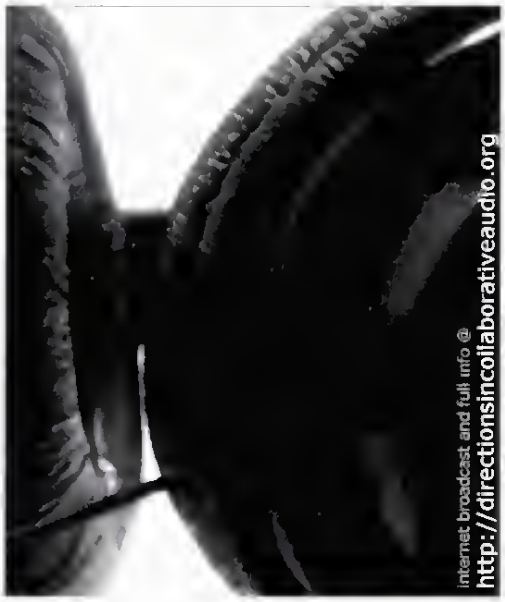

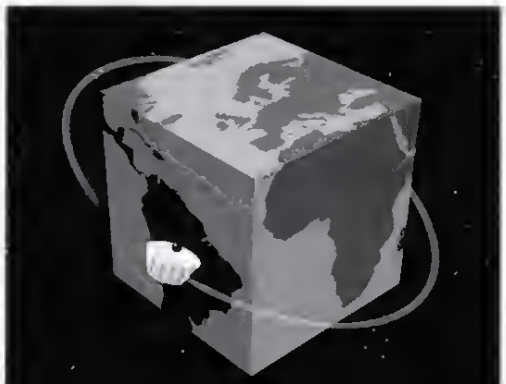

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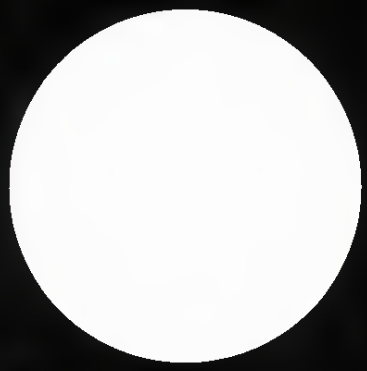

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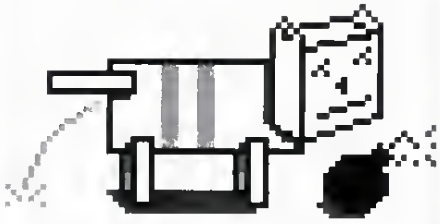

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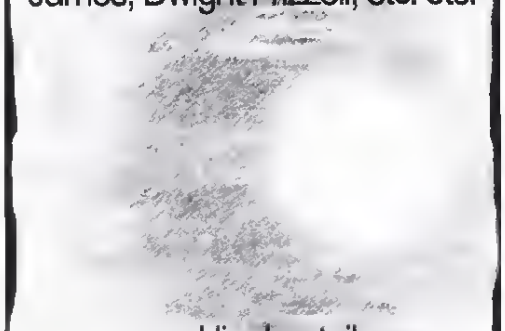

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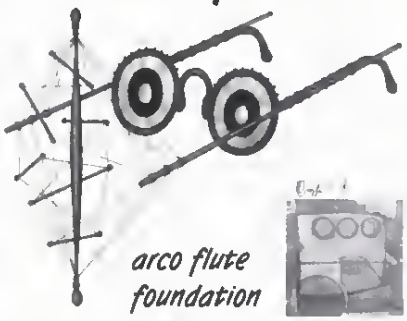

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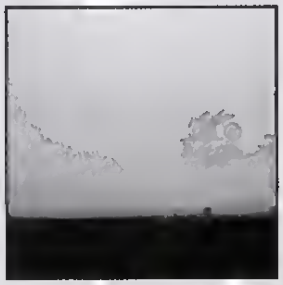

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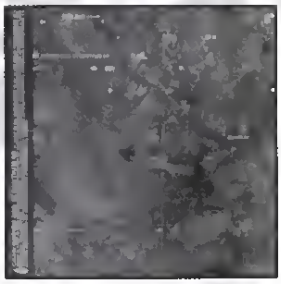

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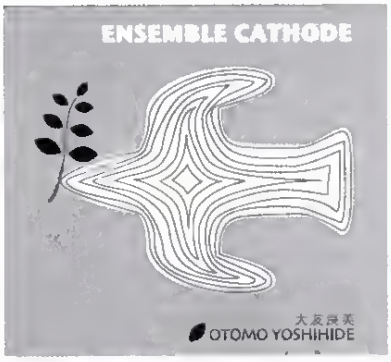

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Epiphanies

Of all the musicians who have died young, Sergey Kuryokhin's taboo-breaking madness endures most, says Verity Sharp

Banned in the USSR. Sergey Kuryokhin

For a DJ like myself in the privileged position of being able to play exactly what I want on the radio, moments of epiphany come with a welcome regularity. Nothing beats the feeling of coming across music that's just screaming out to be taken to the studio and shared with the nation, like Radiohead's *Amnesiac*, Ross Daly playing the Cretan lyra, the incredibly deep throat-singing of Yat-Kha's Albert Kuvezin, or the eccentric, often ethereal music of Sergey Kuryokhin. As these moments of euphoria are all too many to list, Kuryokhin's story at least gives me a way of filtering a couple out, as he was a musician who died way before his time.

Back in 1999, the Glaswegian, post-rock group Mogwai chose the invitation *Come On, Die Young* as the title of their second album, and for those musicians who do pass away early, curious things seem to happen posthumously to their reputations. Jeff Buckley's voice has become more fragile, the songs of Nick Drake more loaded with meaning, and even the music written back in the days when dying young was far less remarkable, takes on an added, almost perverse, fascination. The feeling of being lifted into the air by the opening of Mendelssohn's *Octet* and then taken on a remarkable journey becomes even more emotional when you discover that it was written by a boy who was just 16 years old at the time, and dead by the age of 38. But maybe it's better to die young than to struggle doggedly on, especially if you can master a metaphorical rather than actual death, like Captain Beefheart who, after releasing *Ice Cream For Crow* with the new Magic Band in 1982, killed off his songwriting alter-ego in favour of pursuing his other love, painting, full time. Some believe Frank Zappa could have concentrated more on quality rather than quantity in his final years, but that didn't stop me sticking on *Sheik Yerbouti* the morning he died in December 1993, and playing "Broken Hearts Are For Assholes" at astonishing volume while trying desperately to hold back the tears. Imbibing the sound, I pictured him in my head mocking my distress while standing tall with his guitar, long hair, long nose, head slightly bowed, and forever twitching in time with the lightning fingerwork of his left hand. I had never been fortunate enough to see him or The Mothers Of Invention play live, but seeing the group on film was certainly one moment of epiphany. The sight of Ruth Underwood's ecstatic expression as she improvised a marimba solo out of nowhere during a live rendition of "Moving To Montana", and watching the synchronicity between Zappa and Steve Vai, simply had me engrossed.

There have been few groups to match The Mothers Of Invention and Zappa's methodology, apart, perhaps, from the St Petersburg based group Pop Mekhanika, led by the late Russian pianist and composer Sergey Kuryokhin. His reputation as the fastest Improv pianist around stretched well beyond the former Soviet Union, and his ideas were sometimes on a par with Zappa's legendary weirdness (his group utilised anything from dustbin lids to bagpipes). He also wrote film and concert music, and the first piece of his I came across was called *Sparrow Oratorium*, an album's worth of music that had me rooted to the spot. By the time it finished, I still wasn't sure if I'd just listened to the most kitsch or the most creative thing I'd heard in a long while. Off-putting drum samples and washes of occasionally tacky synthesized sound somehow provided the most intriguing backdrop to an expansive whirl through the four seasons, featuring the utterly compelling voice of Marina Kapuro. I've since learnt that the piece was written in the early 90s for a man who was lamenting the fact that sparrows had deserted his native Norway, and believed Kuryokhin's music had the power to encourage them to come back. The thought is not so obscure if you consider that in the 80s, during perestroika, Pop Mekhanika concerts were renowned for the surreal presence of animals – hens, sheep, even a horse on one occasion – wandering around onstage. Having suffered years of oppression and been forced to work underground fearing prison or death for their status as 'unofficial' musicians under communism, such decisions to turn the stage into a makeshift farmyard were perhaps a way of celebrating the beginning of more enlightened era – although more cynically, it could equally have been a desperate attempt to retain something of the dangerously experimental edge to their work that had been one inevitable result of prohibition.

My admiration for Kuryokhin's music led me to look up his widow Anastasia and friend Alexei Piusnin when I was in St Petersburg last year. Alexei was soon telling me gruffly that after Sergei died, music making in St Petersburg simply ground to a halt. For a moment I wondered whether this wasn't another case of a reputation morphing in retrospect, as Kuryokhin was one of those who also died tragically young, in his case of cancer suddenly in 1996. But after a morning spent sitting at Anastasia's kitchen table with Sergei's seven year old son, watching a video of their late husband and father talking with passion about his music and conducting the group in his truly idiosyncratic way, crouching on the floor to indicate soft sections and leaping clean into the air to get everyone to stop, I fell willingly into the trap of granting the forever young Sergey Kuryokhin a saintly status. □

Verity Sharp is co-presenter of BBC Radio 3's Late Junction. *The Late Junction label is launched this month with releases by John Adams, Max Richter and a compilation of the show's favourites. Website www.bbc.co uk/radio3/ world/latejunction shtml*

PHOTO MEL YATES

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